CHARLES DE BOURBON,

LORD CONSTABLE OF FRANCE.

A HISTORICAL ROMANCE,

BY ALPHONSE ROYER.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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CHARLES DE BOURBON.

BOOK FIRST.

THE DISGRACE.....PART I.

On an evening of June, in the year 1522, after the curfew had sounded, and while silence reigned in the streets of Paris, a woman, whose features and figure were concealed—the one with a mask, and the other with a mantle of black silk—walked rapidly along the rue Saint Antoine, and turned around occasionally, as if to discover whether she was pursued or watched. At some distance behind her, a man, enveloped in his cloak, strode stealthily along, stopping, however, when she stopped, and evidently regulating his movements by hers.

As the lady came to the crossing of a by-street, she gave a sudden scream; for she found herself unexpectedly surrounded by a company of drunken lacqueys, who, flourishing their smoking and nearly extinguished torches, swore she should accompany them to the hotel of the Lord Chabot de Brion, (a younger scion of the house of Jarnac, and a favorite of the king,) whither they were proceeding to attend upon their masters.

The man, who had thus far followed the lady in silence, rushed forward at her cry of alarm, and seizing the leader of the drunken band by the ear, ordered him, by an imperative gesture, to proceed on quietly with his comrades. The lacqueys all uncovered themselves to this mute personage, and took to their heels like a flock of sparrows. While the lady, after a profusion of grateful acknowledgments for his timely interference, begged the stranger's permission to continue her walk unattended. He, however, was not so readily dismissed; but claimed, as a recompense for the service he had rendered, a sight of the fair wanderer's face. His request was twice repeated, and twice refused; and he reiterated it a third time, with more earnestness, pledging his honor that the lady need not fear to trust him; but her refusal was still more peremptory than before.

The stranger then grasped her hand, saying,

"Since you persist in your refusal to reveal yourself, I will tell you who you are, and what you seek. You are called Susan de Langenfeld, daughter of a German captain, who is even now recruiting lasquenets on the farther side of the Rhine, for the service of the Constable de Bourbon."

The masked lady started, and trembled from head to foot at this address; but she made no reply beyond a single exclamation of terrified surprise.

The stranger, without heeding her emotion, proceeded:

"You are, also, lady of honor to Louisa of Savoy, Duchess of Angoulême, and mother to our king, Francis the First—and you are the some two months' bride of a gentleman of Bourbonnais, Ponthus de Saint Romain."

"My God! assist me!" murmured the unfortunate lady, leaning for support against the wall of a house.

"This evening," continued the stranger, "you disguised yourself in this cloak and mask, and left, by stealth, the hotel des Tournelles, without a single lacquey to attend you; and you are now, at nine o'clock in the night, in an obscure part of the rue Saint Antoine, exposed to the insults of every ruffian that passes. Here you are, I repeat, a bride, your head bewildered by love, seeking the man you adore—and that man *not* your husband!"

The lady was now so overcome, that she

was near falling to the ground; but her implacable companion still persisted:

"That man is the Constable de Bourbon, a prince of the blood royal, the highest in France, next to the king. He is your lover; and he comes this night to Paris, from his villa of Moulins in Bourbonnais. You are impatient at his delay, and are going to seek him in yonder house, if he does not soon present himself here, in conformity to his promise. Will you *now* refuse to confide in me?"

"My Lord de Bonnivet!" exclaimed the lady, removing her mask, "do not betray me!"

The stranger, in turn, dropped his mantle from his face, smiling at the terror he inspired. He was, in truth, Guillaume Gouffrier, Admiral de Bonnivet, and one of the principal favorites of Francis the First.

Madam de Saint Romain was a victim worthy to swell the list of the admiral's conquests. Her fine oval face, her full black eyes, her wit, her grace, and the undefinable charm of her person and manner, all contributed to inflame the vainest fop of the hotel des Tournelles, who was now following the bent of his passion, despite the danger he incurred by crossing the path of so formidable a rival as the Constable de Bourbon. Indeed, this same personage, when, one night, Francis I. and his suite accepted a lodging in his chateau of Bonnivet, had the hardihood to introduce himself, by means of a trap-door, into the apartment of Margaret de Valois, Duchess of Alençon, and sister of the king. Nor was the duchess relieved from his rudeness but by the intervention of her maids of honor.

"Madam," said Bonnivet, at length, with affected politeness, to the lady whom he had first delivered from the lacqueys, and now seemed disposed to humiliate to the utmost, "you have not to learn that I hate the Constable de Bourbon with my whole heart, and that he as warmly reciprocates my hatred; but gallantry, like war, has its own laws."

"You are not my judge, my lord," replied Madam de Saint Romain, with dignity; "yet you must listen to me. It is true, I came here in search of my lord Constable; and it is also true, that I love him; but the passion is pure and holy, and confers on no one the right to despise me. Love him!" continued she, her eyes kindling with enthusiasm; "and wherefore should I not love him? Driven from my home, while yet a child—deprived of my mother, whom I never knew—I was brought by my father to the Constable's villa of Moulins, where I found a new home, under the fostering care of his wife, Susan de Beaujeu, who bestowed on me her name, in token of her love. At length, death deprived me of my benefactress; and I soon learned that gratitude was not the only passion of which my heart was capable. What woman could resist the happiness of being beloved by a hero, whom all Europe admired, at an age when other men scarce know the meaning of glory? I did resist, however. I resolved to cherish this passion in its purity, so that its remembrance might never bring bitter thoughts to my pillow. I quitted the chateau of Moulins, came to Paris, and was received by Madam d'Angoulême, among the ladies of her suite."

"A year has passed since that event," interrupted the admiral; "and I am bound to confess that, during that time, you have inflicted on the court the unheard-of scandal of an irreproachable life. I will be revenged on you for setting the court so pernicious an example."

"Here," continued the lady, without heeding the interruption, "I met M. de Saint Romain, one of the Constable's cavaliers, who had previously seen me at Moulins. The commands of my father and the Duchess d'Angoulême made him my husband before I was aware, as I now am, of the violence thus done to my affections. Nevertheless, from that day I ceased even to correspond with the Duke de Bourbon, who has passed this year in his dominions of Languedoc. And now, sir, you know all."

Bonnivet gazed for some moments at the lovely creature who stood trembling before him: at length he endeavored to reassure her, by saying:

"I cannot condemn you, madam, for a fault that I would willingly take on my own soul, even at the risk of its damnation! You are no whit more criminal in my estimation, than the beautiful Countess de Chateaubriand, whom some censorious cavillers style the king's mistress, but whom we, as you know, call the brightest ornament of the Court of France. Madam Marguerite herself would find nothing more in your story, than the groundwork of one of those tales of scandal with which she enlivens our mornings at Tournelles. Indeed, who can blame you for not loving your husband, an uncouth country gentleman—though at the same time a sufficiently adroit courtier *not* to perceive the officious assiduities that his protector, my lord duke, renders you under his very eyes. By Saint Denis! this is a skilful intrigue; and the innocent ignorance of M. de Saint

Romain conceals a *science profonde*, the secret of which I am the first to envy him!"

"Hold, sir!" cried Susan; "you are calumniating the most honorable of men. M. de Saint Romain has never suspected——"

"Oh! doubtless," continued Bonnivet, with a sneer, "the Constable's favors have seemed to him no more than a merited homage to his distinguished abilities—which abilities, indeed, no one but himself has ever discovered!"

"Admiral Bonnivet!" said Susan, drawing herself up with dignity, "I esteem my husband, and I earnestly desire to love him."

"And you would have me believe," returned the admiral, with that facetious air which served his purpose so well with the ladies of the court—"you would have me believe that you have given this rendezvous to my lord duke, to apprise him of your conversion!"

"I desire to see him once more," replied Madam de Saint Romain, slightly blushing, in spite of her efforts to restrain all emotion—"I desire to see him once more; but, I swear to you, it shall be for the last time. Has not the story of his marriage with the Duchess d'Angoulême gained new currency of late? and is it not generally averred that the mother of Francis is about to raise nearer to the throne him whose indifference toward herself has so long kept him back from that station? If, as we are assured, years have failed to weaken the potency of love in the breast of that haughty sovereign, I can behold without pain the Duke de Bourbon sacrificing the sentiments of his heart to the advancement of his fortune."

"It is my opinion, however," said Bonnivet, raising his voice as he turned toward the sombre portico of the shop, in the shade of which he indistinctly saw some object moving—"It is my opinion, that the day for that fortunate union will not commence with to-morrow's sun."

"Who can tell that?" said the lady. "I would be the first to congratulate the duke on his good fortune. And now, my lord," continued she, after a moment's pause, "though there is nothing at which I need blush in this connexion, you must be aware that I should be lost were the duchess to discover it. A sovereign who loves will neither brook nor spare a rival. Suffer me, therefore, as I leave you, to intrust my honor under the safeguard of your discretion."

"By my faith!" exclaimed the admiral, with a laugh, "you could not intrust it to safer hands!"

At this instant, another female, accompanied by an old man and two lacqueys, issued from the shade of the portico, where she had for some minutes concealed herself.

She was pale and trembling with rage; and as she approached Susan, she seized her arm with the grasp of a tiger.

"The Duchess d'Angoulême!" screamed the affrighted Madam de Saint Romain; "then I am lost, indeed!"

The unfortunate passion of the duchess for her cousin, Charles de Bourbon, her jealousy, and her revenge exhibited on more than one memorable occasion, together with her unbounded influence over the king—all proclaimed to Susan de Saint Romain the peril of her position. The presence, too, of Antoine Duprat in company with the duchess, boded no good. This man, originally a country gentleman of Auvergne, grown gray amid the vilest intrigues of the court, had attained the dignity of Chancellor of France, by subserving the passions and vices of the queen-mother. He was the prototype of venality in office. After the decease of his wife, Françoise de Veny, daughter of Michael, lord of Arbouze, he took holy orders, the better to promote his personal ambition. He became, successively, bishop of Meaux, Abbi, Valence and Gap, and archbishop of Sens. In 1527, he received the cardinal's hat, for which he was intriguing, at the time our story begins.

The queen-mother continued to grasp the arm of her rival with both hands, as if fearful she might escape.

"Retract nothing that you have spoken," said she at length, in a deep, threatening tone. "Let me have no false oaths! no perjury! I was concealed yonder on purpose to listen, and you have fallen into the snare!"

"My lord," said Susan to Bonnivet, "you have practiced upon me a foul dishonor!"

"Audacious!" exclaimed the wrathful duchess: "dare you pronounce anything dishonorable! You, who are recreant to your own duties: only two months married, and now stand here without faith and without shame, confessing your infamy? You shall reckon with me for this! Come hither, Duprat."

At this command, the old man, who had stood respectfully behind the duchess, advanced to her side, while she continued:

"In order to show this woman that the marriage between the lord Constable and myself exists only in the imagination of certain fools, I will do what you have proposed to me. I charge you to institute,

to-morrow, an action before the parliament of France, in the king's name and mine, against Charles de Bourbon, for the forfeiture of his wife's inheritance, which, indeed, is all the wealth he possesses."

Then, turning to Susan, she added:

"Yes, madam! one word of mine can make this splendid Constable as poor as the meanest squire in his retinue: is it not so, my lord chancellor?"

"It is true, your grace," answered Duprat, submissively. "The fortune of the duchess, Susan de Beaujeu, reverts legally to the crown, as we can prove, at the fitting time and place, by authentic documents."

"You hear what he says of my power over the duke?" said the duchess to Susan.

"But you will not exercise it, madam?" replied Susan, timidly raising her eyes to her angry rival.

"I will, on the honor of a queen!" cried the duchess; "and you shall see how his pride will wear the livery of poverty. My lord chancellor," she continued, addressing herself to Duprat, "seeing that this man of Bourbon has unlawfully taken possession of certain duchies, counties, viscounties and seigniories, you are to omit in your indictment his assumed titles of Duke of Bourbonnais and Auvergne. Do you now believe, madam," said she, again turning to Susan, "that I purpose to espouse your Constable?"

Had Madam de Saint-Romain alone incurred the wrath of the angry duchess, she would quietly have submitted to her vengeance, without seeking to parry its violence; but in the present case, the fortune, and, perhaps, the life of the man she loved, were involved; and she roused herself to the emergency, determined, if possible, to concentrate all the consequences of her fault on her own head.

"If I am guilty, madam," said she, "here are my hands; bind them: nay, here is my head; give it to the executioner. Or, if your vengeance reaches so far, here is my whole person; place it on the rack, and torture it till you are appeased. I may have loved boldly where I should diffidently have respected: but that a mighty prince of the-blood royal, a hero, whom God has crowned with the rays of his own glory, should abase himself to the love of such an one as I, the poor daughter of an obscure captain of lasquenets, is what your highness cannot for an instant believe. See the distance which separates us! He is on the summit of a peak that reaches to the sky, while I dwell in the profoundest valley beneath his feet. He moves in the sphere of the eagle, and I crawl with the humble worm! Is it not true, madam, that thousands of maidens daily pass your windows, who are far more lovely than I am? And is it not equally true that, neither among dukes nor princes, nor among kings on their thrones, can a man be found more accomplished or more worthy to be loved than the Constable de Bourbon?"

The queen-mother bent down her head and sighed, and Madam de Saint Romain continued:

"Is it to be inferred, because I could amuse a few of the duke's leisure moments in a solitary chateau, that a remembrance of me has left any trace on his heart, swelling as it is with so many mighty emotions? And do you not think, madam, that I, notwithstanding the illusions of my aspiring love, know how little is my real worth, and how utter my insignificance? Alas! a year of exile has convinced me that I am abandoned to despair!"

Madam d'Angoulême was somewhat appeased at these words. The expression of her face became less threatening, and the flashes of her eye grew less vivid. So prone is a loving heart to flatter itself!

Susan watched the effect of her artifice with a mingled feeling of fear and hope: to her, the result would be life or death—heaven or hell! And when the duchess demanded the reason for the rendezvous that she had accepted from the Constable, she replied eagerly:

"It was I, madam, who made the appointment."

"Ha! is it so, pretty one?" cried the duchess; "then all may be well. But I will assure myself of the truth of what you say. Give me your mask, and I will witness this interview. Tell him I am a woman of your train: but I warn you, stir not from this spot! If you have deceived me; if the Constable does indeed love you, you may well tremble for yourself and for him!"

Susan had no alternative but to accept these fearful conditions: her only hope was, that the Constable might not keep his engagement.

She was not held long in suspense. In a few moments, Bonnivet, who was on the alert, announced the gleaming of torches in the distance; and Susan's heart beat audibly, as the lights came nearer, and a man detached himself from the group, and approached the place where she stood. The admiral and the chancellor retired to the corner of the adjoining street, and the

masked duchess stepped behind Madam de Saint Romain. Immediately the Constable stood at her side.

He made a gesture to his attendants, who immediately turned back and retraced their steps up the rue Saint Antoine; then, turning toward the lady he sought, and letting his mantle fall in graceful folds around his person, he exclaimed:

"Susan! dear Susan!"

As he spoke he caught sight of the duchess, and checked himself, to inquire of Susan whether she were a person in whose presence he could speak unreservedly.

Susan, it may well be conceived, was almost frantic with a desire to utter some word, or make some sign of caution to the Constable; but the duchess gave her no opportunity: for she instantly dictated Susan's reply to his question; and he, satisfied that the unknown female was a faithful friend and confidant, gave no further thought to her presence.

"I have been but an hour in Paris," said he, kissing Susan's hand with eagerness of joy. "The king at this moment awaits me at Tournelles; but before the king, before the court, before all else that the wide world contains, did I desire to see you, Susan, so long my inflexible empress!"

Madam de Saint Romain gently repelled him; hoping, by dissembled coldness, to give another turn to this dangerous conversation; but de Bourbon, wholly unconscious of his relative position, and unsuspicious of harm, was not quick to perceive her design, and continued his passionate protestations.

"How eager have I been," said he, "to hear your voice, and see your eyes! and now, my love! my life! I have you at last! Come; let us go into the hotel, where all is prepared to receive you. Come! I am jealous of the very sky, of the wind that wafts my words from your ear, of the inquisitive stars that disturb the mystery of our interview! Come! come!"

"Oh, no, my lord!" cried Susan, almost beside herself with terror and vexation; "I can remain but an instant—and—but—the king awaits you."

"Still let him wait," replied de Bourbon vehemently; "do I not love you, ungrateful girl! And would you thus abridge this interview, that I for six long months have not ceased to solicit?"

"Your delicate generosity, my lord duke," said Susan, "enhances the value of your condescension: for, while you yield to the importunities of one, who must needs be an object of indifference to you, you make it appear that it is she who grants, and you who receive, the favor."

"And is it not so, Susan?" inquired the Constable, with a tone of ingenuousness, that was fearfully convincing of his sincerity.

Susan's embarrassment increased with the impetuosity and imprudence of her lover. She hastily extricated herself from his grasp, and assuming a cold, formal air, said:

"I desired to see you, my lord duke, to speak with you concerning my marriage, and to recommend Monsieur de Saint Romain to your kindness."

"Was it only for that?" cried the duke, in great astonishment.

"You have always distinguished him among the gentlemen of your household," steadily continued Susan, "and you are assured that he is devoted to you. The honor you have publicly rendered to his good qualities, is a proof of your high esteem; and I earnestly hope that you will give him a fitting opportunity to serve you to your advantage and his own honor. This, my lord, is my true and the only motive for entreating you to grant me this interview."

The unfortunate Madam de Saint Romain thought that she should expire in pronouncing these words—words, which the agitation of her manner and the throbbings of her heart so entirely contradicted. De Bourbon, unjust as all lovers are who know they are loved in return, chose to suspect rather than to understand her. He gave utterance to a torrent of reproach and accusation; and ended with such a detailed relation of his own grievances, that the Duchess d'Angoulême, who was stifling with rage under her mask, soon learned the whole history of the Constable's passion from his own lips.

"My lord! my lord!" exclaimed Susan, forgetting the peril in which she stood, and regardless of everything but her own wrongs; "you are treating me with the extremity of injustice and cruelty. If you knew——"

"Speak! explain yourself!" cried the duke impetuously, as she hesitated and evinced an emotion that he could not understand: "are we not alone?"

A prompt and emphatic negative trembled on Susan's lips; but ere she could utter it, the duchess advanced a step toward her, and she replied in a faltering tone:

"Oh, yes! quite alone."

The duke, reassured by her words and softened by her manner, took her hand; and at the same instant a ray of moonlight,

struggling through the clouds that darkened the sky, illuminated his face and revealed the emotion with which he was agitated.

"Susan," said he, "listen to me: I love you as deeply, as passionately, as devotedly as man can love."

"Oh, say not so, my lord!" interrupted the lady; "you might be overheard!"

"And what if I were?" returned the duke haughtily. "Shall I fear to avow my love? No! not if the powers of heaven and the devils in hell should bid me hold my peace! Think you that this detestable marriage which it is rumored the king desires to impose upon me, shall prevent my telling a woman that I love her!"

"For the love of Heaven!" cried Susan, losing all command of herself, and placing her hand upon his lips; but the duke would not be so interrupted, and went on:

"By Saint Barbe! I am too rough a courtier not to declare in the face of all the royalty of France, that I will never wed a woman old enough to be my mother, though her gray hairs be hid under a queenly crown!"

Susan *felt* that the Duchess d'Angoulême was quivering with rage, and she heard her muttering some indistinct and passionate words: perceiving, then, that all was revealed, she boldly cried out:

"Your courage, my lord, restores to me my own! I will practise no more evasions! I love you now more fervently than ever before. Not my voluntary exile, nor remorse of conscience, nor fear, nor opprobrium, nay, nor my very vows at the altar, can change the fixed purpose of my soul. I love you, my lord Constable, and am beloved by you! I avow this freely, though in so doing, I defy your judge and my executioner, who," she added, turning her head, "stands at my side!"

The Duchess d'Angoulême tore off her mask, trampled it under her feet, and stepped forward, livid with fury.

The brow of the duke was slightly and for an instant contracted; but presently his features resumed their wonted serenity, and he calmly awaited the issue. Bonnivet and Duprat immediately came up, and the lacqueys advanced with their torches to light up a scene that was a menacing prelude to the mournful drama thereafter to be enacted.

"This outrage is mortal," cried the duchess, turning to her attendants, and vainly endeavoring to stifle her anger, "but it shall be dearly revenged!" Then looking at the Constable, she continued, with all the calmness she could command, "In order to please my son, the king, and by a marriage (in itself sufficiently absurd,) to heal the discords between the branches of Angoulême and Montpensier, I consented to accept you for a husband; and"—she added, with a bitterness she could not repress—"I have already been sufficiently punished for my condescension. My lord de Bonnivet, lead on to the hotel des Tournelles. Madam de Saint Romain, my authority over you, which is not yet lost, I shall presently transfer to your husband's keeping. My lord duke, between us there is no compromise: it is now war to the death! We shall meet to-morrow before the king."

"Your grace shall see me there to-night," replied de Bourbon.

THE DISGRACE.....PART II.

When Madam d'Angoulême and her suite had retired, the Constable de Bourbon drew his mantle around him, and proceeded deliberately toward his own hotel. The adventure of which he had just been the hero, and which he well knew must have an important influence on his future fortunes, seemed scarcely to occupy his mind. Nevertheless, a storm was gathering over him, and never, even in his fiercest battles, was he beset with more frightful peril than now. He soon rejoined his attendants, who had waited for him, and went on to his palace in silence, where all were on foot to receive him. With a proud bearing, he strode through a double line of guards and pages, and, followed by his suite, entered a magnificent hall, where a sumptuous supper was spread. Nothing could equal the splendor which it pleased the Constable de Bourbon to display at his hotel in Paris, and at his numerous chateaux in the country. The King himself, indeed, had often been jealous of a vassal who seemed determined to eclipse him whenever they met. In the salon, as well as on the field, the two cousins had more than once contended for the mastery; and despite all his own wit, grace and bravery, Francis had been forced to yield to the Constable.

Charles de Bourbon was now thirty-

three years old. He was a worthy and a handsome man, and one of the most renowned captains of his age. His fame had drawn around him a court of young men from the highest families in France, who considered it an honor to learn under him the profession of arms.

When he was eighteen years old, he accompanied Louis XII. into Italy, and aided in the conquest of Genoa. As if to foreshadow the sumptuousness he was afterward to display, he, on this occasion, marshalled a troop of cavaliers, with a hundred men-at-arms, and as many archers, from his own household, and conducted them through the campaign at his own expense. Two years later, he followed the King, in the same manner, into Milan, where his prowess and address brought the expedition to a successful issue. He defended, successively, the duchies of Milan, Guyenne, Burgundy and Picardy, against the Imperialists, the Pope and the Swiss. In 1515, after the battle of Marignan—wherein this young warrior, then but twenty-six years of age, performed prodigies of valor, and displayed astonishing military precocity—Francis I. conferred on him the dignity of Constable of France.

Since this period, many untoward circumstances had conspired to exert a malign influence over their fraternity of arms: for Francis, misguided by his own jealousy and the evil counsels of his mother, the Duchess d'Angoulême, had unworthily, and by degrees, severed the bonds of confidence and friendship that once attached the two cousins so firmly together.

Even as early as 1516, the duke's pay was suspended, although, at that very time, the King was indebted to him for a loan of ten thousand crowns. Nevertheless, his private fortune enabled him to live royally, despite the petty machinations of the court. He was Duke of Bourbonnais and Auvergne; Count of Clermont in Beauvais; Count of Montpensier, Forets, La Marche and Clermont in Auvergne; Dauphin of Auvergne; Viscount of Carlat and Murat; Lord of Beaujolais, Combrailles, Mercœur, Annonay, Roche-in-Regnier and Bourbon-Lancey; Peer and Chamberlain of France; Lieutenant-general to the King, in Burgundy and Languedoc; and governor of the last-named province. His wife Susan, daughter of Anne of France and Duchess of Beaujeu, had brought him nearly all these princely possessions by marriage, and died leaving him her sole heir. It was this inheritance of which the Duchess d'Angoulême and her counsellor Duprat now sought to despoil him, by a scandalous law-suit; for the queen-mother was cousin to the precedent owner in the same degree as the duchess Susan, and this inheritance would legally have descended to her on the death of Susan, had not the order of succession in the house of Bourbon been, from time immemorial, regulated by the salique law. Hence, after what had just taken place in the rue Saint Antoine, the duke had reason to be chagrined and moody: but, if he were so, neither his countenance nor deportment betrayed it.

"What news have we, gentlemen?" said he, as he seated himself at the table, while one of his pages held a basin of silver-gilt for his ablutions.

"Nothing of moment, my lord," replied Montagnac-Tausanne, his grand chamberlain. "Your cousin, the King, still writes and re-writes ballads and madrigals for his mistresses, without considering that Fortune—that other and most fickle of all mistresses—is, at this moment, betraying him by a thousand infidelities, in Milan."

"It is rumored," added Pomperant, captain of the duke's garde-ordinaire, "that Monsieur de Lautrec has suffered himself to be defeated in Italy."

"So much the worse, then," said the Constable, "so much the worse, gentlemen; for de Lautrec is a brave man. True, the intrigues of our court, wrested the duchy of Milan from me to bestow it on him; but I am sorry to hear this. Would to God, the king would replace with such men as Lautrec, the Montchenus, the Brions, and all that brood of favorites, who befool him with their ridiculous counsels."

"My lord," said a gentleman, called de Lescure, to the duke, "here is Varennes, just arrived from Tournelles; he can give you the latest news from his majesty."

"Well," rejoined the Constable, quaffing a goblet of rich Spanish wine, "and what is the king about, just now? I'll lay a wager he is discussing the affairs of the kingdom with a fair lady, whom we all know."

"You say true, my lord," replied Varennes; "his majesty retired to a private conference with a lady, as I quitted the palace. This lady, too, spoke of you; and the king appeared much angered at what she told him."

"This time, at least," said the Constable, extending his goblet to the cup-bearer, "my royal cousin cannot accuse me of running away with his sweet-hearts; for you can all bear me witness that I have just arrived in Paris."

"Who was the lady, Varennes?" shout-

ed two or three voices at once. "Tell us at once, that we may laugh at our ease."

"I fear," replied Varennes, "that her name would sound harshly in these halls."

"No matter for that," was the answer; "let us hear."

"It was the Duchess d'Angoulême," said Varennes.

A brief silence succeeded this announcement, during which each guest turned his eyes thoughtfully toward de Bourbon. The ill-starred love of the duchess, was a secret to no one present; for the duke had not deigned to conceal either her attachment, or his own dislike; and all looked for some explosion on his part, when her name was thus pronounced. He, however, maintained his composure; and before conversation was resumed, an usher announced to the grand chamberlain, that two gentlemen, whose names were written on a folded note that he presented, desired a moment's conference with the lord Constable.

Montagnac-Tausanne hesitated to comply with this request, when the duke, who overheard the message, ordered the paper to be handed to him. He had scarcely cast his eyes over it, when he arose from the table, and abruptly dismissed his guests. His features, mean time, were agitated; but to those who observed him most closely, it seemed that the expression was rather one of half-disguised joy, than of discontent or anger.

As soon as the hall was cleared, the usher, in obedience to a gesture from the Constable, admitted two strangers. One was an old man, of high and noble bearing; the other, a warrior, booted, spurred, and covered with the dust of travel. This latter personage was in the prime of manhood; his air was arrogant and haughty; and his face, covered with scars, testified that he had rendered faithful service to his country.

The Constable rose to meet them as they entered.

"Is it possible, my lord Marshal de Lautrec!" cried he, to the scarred warrior; "are you here, and without an order from the king? But whatever brings you hither, you are welcome under my poor roof; and so are you, my lord superintendent de Semblançay. Myself, my sword, and my purse are at your service—and now, what is the matter?"

"I have lost my army, my lord Constable," murmured de Lautrec, in a low voice; "my own fine army of Italy, that had won me twenty battles."

"You know, my lord Constable," interposed Jacques de Beanne, Baron de Semblançay, "the hatred of the queen-mother toward the house of Foix. It was in order to humble this illustrious family, in the person of its head, the brave Marshal de Lautrec, that the Duchess d'Angoulême treacherously and forcibly withheld the four hundred thousand crowns, destined for the pay of the troops."

"Owing to which default of payment," added de Lautrec, "the Swiss went over to the enemy; my Venetian allies, fled; and my brave Frenchmen were outnumbered and slain."

And so saying, the marshal bent down his head, and big tears, in spite of himself, forced their way down the deep cicatrices of his cheeks. The Constable grasped his hand.

"You too, then, my brave de Lautrec," said he, "have been marked as a victim by the wretches, who have sworn to ruin the kingdom. It is their fixed purpose to goad on to the utmost extent of desperation, all the most noble and generous blood of France. The peculations, and secret rapine of the lasquenets of finance, under the mantle of royalty, have not sufficed; for now, the robbers cast off the mask, and pocket the public moneys, in the face of day. The queen-mother is, by the grace of God, the worthy leader of the spoilers; and the lord chancellor of France, is her lieutenant! We live in glorious times, sirs, do we not? But let us be patient, and we shall see the end of this!"

The Constable ceased speaking, but he strode up and down the hall in great agitation. The marshal and superintendent spoke together in an under tone for a few moments, when suddenly de Bourbon turned to them, saying:

"Have you the proof, my lord, of what you say?"

"Sire," replied the superintendent, "I have the queen-mother's acknowledgment for the money in my iron-chest."

"De Lautrec and de Semblançay," said the Constable in a firm, deliberate tone, "will you meet me in one hour at the hotel des Tournelles? Bring with you Madam Louisa's acknowledgment, and I, in presence of king and court, will claim the justice that Francis dare not refuse!"

"We will be there within the hour," said de Lautrec.

De Bourbon now conducted his guests as far as the door of his hotel. As soon as they had departed, he gave orders to his whole retinue to hold themselves immediately in readiness, in their gala dresses for the king's ball at the hotel des Tournelles. This order created universal sur-

prise; the Constable having, for a long time avoided all communication with the courtiers of Francis, who were, for the most part, his personal foes. Nevertheless, the command was obeyed with alacrity; and ere a half hour had elapsed, all was prepared. The archers, arrayed in their hoquetons, bearing the arms of France, with the band of gueules; the lacqueys in splendid liveries, holding aloft their flambeaux; and the horses, caparisoned and impatiently pawing the courtyard. The Constable appeared among his household, gave a word of commendation in return for their alacrity; the whole company mounted, and at the word from Tausanne, set forward.

The duke pursued his way silently in the midst of this long cavalcade, until he was aroused from his revery by loud shouts of laughter, coming from a distance in the rear.

"What is the matter, there?" he inquired, reigning his horse out of the ranks.

"I will see, my lord," said Varennes, who also drew out and spurred his steed to the spot whence the sound proceeded.

The whole cavalcade, meantime, came to a halt; and in a few moments Varenne returned, followed by eight or ten young men of the Constable's train, who were driving before them a female apparently of the lower orders, whose ghastly looks and strange words excited their hilarity.

"It is an old idiot, my lord," said Varennes, "whom the archers are conducting to prison, because she has insulted many members of your household."

De Bourbon made a sign to the archers to remain where they were.

"My lord," said one of the duke's officers, advancing respectfully, "we had dismounted, and were looking by the moonlight, at some clowns, hung by the king's orders in a neighboring square, when this Italian Gipsy, who was prowling about for some purpose of sorcery, averred that she desired to see all the trees in France breaking under the weight of similar fruit."

"Yes, my lord," said de Lescure, "and she prophesied, that ere long, cavaliers' cloaks would hang there in the place of clowns' doublets."

"Then, sire," continued a third officer, "we desired the sorceress to prophecy for us in especial; when she protested that each one of us, calling us by name, too, should dangle on a gallows."

"We beseech you, my lord duke," said still another of the train, "suffer us to chastise her; for when she perceived your colors and escutcheon, she dared to say that you would soon follow your varlets. And when one of us pronounced the name of my lord de Semblançay, she exclaimed, 'To Montfauçon with him!'"

"As touching myself," said the duke, "I value not ribaldry like this; but an insult to a venerable old man, who perils his life to unmask imposture, deserves punishment. Let the woman have twenty lashes; and, if she repeat the offence, she shall take the position she prophesies for us."

The archers immediately set about the execution of this sentence, when the old woman escaped from their hands and flew to the Constable.

"Suffer me, my lord," said she, "to speak in my defence: your varlets will soon make me pay dearly for the privilege!"

"You shall have five minutes' respite," answered de Bourbon.

A flash of joy sparkled in the old creature's eyes; she passed her hand over her brow as if to collect her thoughts; and then, with her fingers entangled in the uncombed meshes of her long gray hair, that streamed over her shoulders, she began:

"This will not be the first time, Charles de Bourbon," said she, "that my blood has flowed at thy commands! Thou hast reaped a harvest of carnage on my paternal fields, where men have fallen like blades of corn. My children, poor, innocent lambs! who licked the hands of their butchers, have been slaughtered by thy soldiers. I curse thee, Charles! The Italian sorceress, as thy varlets have styled me, predicts that thou, for all thy present pride and power, shall one day drink deep of thine own tears, instead of perfumed wines. Oh, may I live to see it! Again, I curse thee! and may the voice of groaning Italy ever ring these words in thine ears—God has marked thee for damnation! Bourbon, thou art going to thy ruin!"

"At least, you cannot complain of my want of patience," said the Constable, who had already great difficulty in restraining the indignation of his followers.

The woman was then taken in charge by a picquet of archers, who applied her punishment without delay. The cavalcade now quietly pursued its route; yet, while at a distance from the scene, the torches that lighted the archers at their work, were still visible; and the piercing voice of the old woman reëchoed, through the silent streets, these words: "Bourbon, thou art marching to thy ruin!"

Meantime, the Duchess d'Angoulême, glittering with jewels, and arrayed in golden embroideries, the brilliancy of which was intended to replace that which Time had stolen from her, was receiving at the Hotel des Tournelles, the homage of the most noble and renowned in the capital. The widow of Charles of Orleans, Count d'Angoulême, had never been held as a beauty, at court. Her harsh and angular features, the almost masculine expression of her physiognomy, the freezing severity of her little gray eyes, and the prominent outline of her monstrous aquiline nose, were ill adapted to inspire any sentiment more tender than respect. Forty-seven years, too, had contributed nothing to charms so parsimoniously dealt out by nature. The fiery soul of the queen-mother, therefore, sought, in political intrigue and personal hatred, its needful aliment: and having no exercise for the power of her charms, she revelled in the power of rank and authority. The entertainment now given by her son, was a fitting opportunity for her to display to what extent she enjoyed his confidence.

The king, uttering gallant compliments to the ladies, and exchanging ingenious quodlivets with such young men as he admitted to his intimacy, abandoned the formal felicitations of the evening to his mother, who enjoyed, like a real sovereign, the incense of flattery that unceasingly burns around a crown.

Behind her, stood a circle of her friends, or creatures, who waited impatiently for the moment when their common enemy, de Bourbon, was to be humiliated and ruined.

De Montchenu, affectionately squeezing the hand of Bonnivet, who was conversing in a low tone with Chabot de Brion, said:

"Tell me, good friend, has the duchess yet had audience of the king?"

"You well know," replied the admiral, "that his majesty can refuse nothing to his mother."

"The suit will proceed, then?" added de Montchenu.

"Doubtless," said the admiral; "and when this vainglorious man shall be despoiled of his lands and his pensions, he will bestow less contempt on the favorites, as he pleases to call us."

"For my part," said de Brion, "I have detested him ever since his ostentatious display at the coronation: he seemed determined to eclipse his master. Why, sirs, his robe of twelve ells cost, it is said, three hundred golden crowns by the ell, and was lined with sables; and as for his bonnet, it was loaded with gems to the value of a hundred thousand crowns."

"Ay," said the admiral, "and at the christening of his son, the little Count de Clermont, which ceremony was celebrated with regal pomp at the Chateau de Moulins, I recollect that he led in his suite, five hundred gentlemen clad in velvet of Lyons, each one of whom received from him a present of a golden chain, that reached three times around the neck."

"And more recently still," added another, "when he was commanded to defend Picardy, he entered it with six hundred foot-soldiers and eight hundred horsemen, levied at his own expense.

"And therefore," cried de Bonnivet, "the king, considering him too rich for a subject, wisely divided his four governments. He gave charge of Champagne to the Duke d'Alençon; the duchy of Milan, to de Lautrec; Picardy, to the Duke de Vendôme; and Guyenne, to me. The Constable has never forgotten this, any more than he has forgotten that, at the passage of the Scheldt, the command of the vanguard was taken from him by the king and bestowed on the Duke d'Alençon."

"I trust," said de Montchenu, "that the Duchess d'Angoulême will pare the claws of this hungry lion that threatens to devour us all. But think you, my dear admiral, that, after this evening's adventure, de Bourbon will really dare to present himself here?"

"He dares anything," replied the admiral. "But hush! the duchess accosts the chancellor. Let us withdraw a space. We shall know their decision to-morrow."

From the centre of a group of foreign embassadors and noblemen, where she had just been pleased to exaggerate the great influence that she really possessed over the mind of the king, the Duchess d'Angoulême caught sight of Duprat, who was endeavoring to approach her. She immediately came forward to meet him, and led the way to the embrasure of a window.

"My lord chancellor," said she to him, as he joined her in this place of comparative retirement, "can you guaranty me the support of the parliament?"

"Madam," replied Duprat, bowing very low, "the parliament lay their services at your feet."

"So far, well," said the duchess complacently. "We must now prepare for the new enemy: de Lautrec is in Paris."

"I am aware of that, madam," said Duprat; "and I know, further, what, probably, your grace does not know, that the Consta

ble will this night present him in person to the king."

"Great God!" exclaimed the duchess, startled from her propriety at this astounding piece of intelligence, and visibly turning pale beneath the thick coating of rouge and powder that garnished her cheeks; "we must prevent this interview. If he succeed in speaking with Francis, the acknowledgment that I imprudently left in the treasurer's hands, may come to light. Go—haste, Duprat, and find de Semblançay. Entreat him; bribe him; nay, if need be, threaten him!"

The chancellor smiled and paused, while the duchess anxiously awaited his reply.

"Bribe de Semblançay, madam!" said he; "threaten de Semblançay! Pardon me, but your grace does not know him. It were well, perhaps, to accuse him!"

"Of what? how?" cried the duchess eagerly.

"Your highness need take no concern for the matter: I have already provided for it," answered Duprat.

"My lord chancellor," said the duchess, "if this be so, what do I not owe you? Do you desire the collar of Saint Michel?"

"Madam," said the wily magistrate, with another humble bow, "I am neither a duke nor a peer."

"Is it your wish to be either?" asked the duchess.

The eyes of Antoine Duprat lighted up with a circle of fire, like those of a wolf at sight of a lamb strayed from the fold. He repressed all further emotion, however, and replied modestly:

"I was a private gentleman of Auvergne: I became referendary of the palace under his late majesty, Louis the Twelfth: through your grace's bounty, I was made president of the parliament of Paris, and afterward chancellor of France. I leave to those more ambitious the title of which I am unworthy."

"What reward, then, do you desire?" said the duchess, impatient at this rather overacted diffidence. "Speak out, and let me understand you."

"Madam," replied Duprat, in a perfectly calm tone, "I have always imagined that the keys of Saint Peter would unlock many doors for the benefit of France, should they ever happen to fall into the hands of an intelligent Frenchman, who was devoted to the family of its sovereign."

The duchess stared for a moment in silent wonder, at this demonstration of Duprat's modesty; but she presently stammered out,

"I have no power to create you pope. You as yet hold only a bishopric; and before you can even obtain a seat at the conclave, you need a cardinal's hat."

"I was about to make that observation to your majesty," boldly added the modest chancellor.

"You shall be cardinal, my lord," replied the duchess. "But," added she, perceiving that Duprat was taking the game rather too much into his own hands, to the neglect of her purposes, "you say that you have made provision for de Semblançay: have you the means of annulling his proof?"

"I have, your grace," said Duprat.

"And what are they?" asked the duchess.

Duprat slowly, and in silence, insinuated his hand into a breast-pocket of his dress, and for a few seconds, contemplated the impatient countenance of the fiery duchess. At length, he slowly whispered these words in her ear:

"The acknowledgment for four hundred thousand crowns, on which all the hopes of your enemies repose, can never be produced against you—for it is here!" and at the same time he placed it in her hand.

"My dear Duprat!" cried the queen-mother, actually trembling with joy, and crushing the paper in her grasp; "you shall have your cardinal's hat!"

"Your grace is pleased to load me with obligations," stammered his future eminence.

"You shall have, moreover," continued the duchess, "from the possessions of the Constable, after we have, in due course of law, despoiled him, the baronies of Thiern and Thouri, which I know you have long coveted. And now tell me, by what happy chance this important paper——"

"Nothing is more simple," interrupted Duprat. "A clerk in the treasury, named Gentil, bribed by gold, a promise of preferment——"

"Which promise I here bind myself to fulfill," interrupted the duchess, in turn. "You will place master Gentil's name on the list of councillors to be appointed. And now," she continued, in a tone of proud exultation, "let the Countess de Chateaubriand and her brothers, the Marshal de Foix, and de Lautrec, join their worst malice with that of the Constable de Bourbon! I defy them all!"

As she pronounced these words, a great bustle was heard from the farther extremity of the hall; and the crowd of courtiers already present, undulated with the impulse given by another crowd of courtiers, that had just debouched from the great marble stairway of the palace.

The duchess, despite all her confidence, quailed, as she recognized the arms of France with the band of gueules, embroidered on the coats of the pages, who were ranged along the outer doors of the royal saloons: and the eyes of all were directed to the notable personages, who composed the Constable's cortége, and preceded his person.

At its head, came the officers in ordinary of the house of Bourbon; then, a host of men of the sword, the robe, and the exchequer; next, his men of trust, his friends and commensals—among whom were Jean de Poictiers, the lord and count of Saint Villier, the archbishop of Autun; and my lord de Chabannes, Bishop of Puy.

The Constable himself came last, in a magnificent costume, and with a smile on his lips, replying by a graceful wave of the hand, to the salutations that welcomed him.

Notwithstanding the ceremonious coldness that for a length of time had existed between the king and his cousin, the courtiers continued to adulate the illustrious general, and prince of the blood-royal; especially, as the order of their sovereign, and the complaisant decree of parliament had not yet passed the law which, at a subsequent date, evinced so much insult and ingratitude.

The Duchess d'Angoulême, endeavored to avoid the Constable; but he had already approached her; and, bowing low, said to her, in a whisper,

"You see, madam, I am punctual to my appointment!"

The duchess made no reply; but perceiving that the king approached the group where de Bourbon was standing, she managed to withdraw herself from the crowd, accompanied by the chancellor.

The Constable advanced, uncovered, toward the king, who, despite the jealousy and ill-humor that the duke's presence always inspired in him, endeavored to assume a tone and manner befitting the occasion, and which would also serve the better to conceal the injustice he was preparing to inflict on his much injured cousin; but neither the sovereign nor the duke, could so far overmaster his secret antipathy, as to disguise all asperity in the discourse that ensued.

"God's life!" cried the king, who chose to be the first to speak; "what happy chance brings you hither, my lord Constable? Sooth to say, you are not wont to give us your presence at our humble court, unless some high motive moves you thereto!"

"Your majesty," replied the Constable, "has good cause to be astonished at my intrusion. Of a surety, it is not on the eve of an unjust suit in the law, which proposes to despoil me of my rightful possessions, that I should come hither to make merry, or ask favors. My unimpeachable right, if it please your majesty, is ever my safeguard, and my hope."

"You do well, cousin," replied Francis, "to rely on your judges. But, under favor, you are just now, somewhat imperious; and have the air of dictating a capitulation to the Imperialists, rather than of soliciting grace from our parliament."

"Under favor, also," rejoined de Bourbon, "I would remind your majesty, that I eschew their grace, and ask for nothing but their justice."

"That," said the king, with dignity, "that shall be rendered to you, on the honor of a gentleman!"

"I have reckoned on this, my lord," said the Constable, casting a glance around, as if in search of some one else to whom his words should apply; the duchess and the chancellor, however, had quitted the hall: "I have reckoned on this, my lord, and therefore you see me here, undertaking the cause of the oppressed."

At this moment, the Marshal de Lautrec issued from the crowd, and presented himself before the king.

"Ha!" exclaimed the king, with a frown, "are you here, Marshal de Lautrec? Here without orders! Where is your army?"

"Destroyed, sire," replied de Lautrec, in a firm tone: "destroyed through the treachery of your majesty's favorites!"

"How, sir! destroyed?" cried the king, in a voice of genuine despair.

The Constable interposed, and as he proceeded, his eyes seemed to flash fire:

"The Lord de Bayard," said he, "has saved the wreck of your majesty's squadrons. Of all Milanais, nothing remains, beyond the Alps, but the single fortress of Cremona. Francesco Sforza rules in Milan. Genoa is taken and pillaged. Anthony Adorna is proclaimed Doge by the Spaniards, in lieu of Octavian Fregosa. Pierre de Navarre is in irons. Your Swiss guard is disbanded. Your allies, the Venetians, have deserted your standard. De Foix and Montmorency are beaten and wounded. The élite of your young nobility are slain by the side of their leaders. And this, my lord, all this—this ruin, this disgrace, is brought upon us by the practices of your courtiers! All this blood has fallen, in gold and silver embroidery, upon

their mantles—in diamond aigrettes on the heads of their wives and their mistresses! Yea, they display them now, under the blazing lamps of your presence-chamber! Make room for them, in God's name, that they may pass in their splendor!"

"Now, Heaven assist me!" ejaculated the king, with deep emotion. "My lords, let us cover our holyday attire with mourning, and weep for those who have fallen!"

"Rather," cried the Constable, "let us cover ourselves with iron, and avenge them!"

A fearful silence succeeded. The creatures of the duchess dared not raise their eyes, the king seemed lost in grief, and the old captains, in mute rage, grasped the hilts of their swords, and exchanged with each other looks of wo. The Constable, his arms folded over his breast, looked calmly in the countenance of every one present, and awaited the action of the king toward those whom he had denounced.

Francis beckoned the marshal to approach.

"Sieur de Lautrec," said he, "you must sustain these charges preferred in your name."

"I shall, sire," replied de Lautrec. "The four hundred thousand crowns that your majesty's letters advised me of, were never remitted. Your gen'd'armerie had the generosity to serve for eighteen months without a denier of pay; but the lasquenets and the Swiss deserted, crying, 'Give us our wages, or fight your own warfare!' Hence, sire, arose all our misfortunes!"

"And who detained this money?" cried Francis, with a burst of passion that he did not seek to control.

The Constable leaned on the king's shoulder, and said to him in a low voice:

"De Semblançay will show you the acknowledgment of the duchess d'Angoulême for the whole sum."

Francis grasped the Constable's arm, saying:

"By Heaven, cousin, if this be so, my respect for her shall not shield her from disgrace. But you know that calumny may have had some agency in this accusation. Let the treasurer appear."

The crowd fell back to make room for de Semblançay, who stepped forward, and threw himself at the king's feet.

"Sire," sobbed the old man, "my life is in your hands.

"Speak! speak!" was uttered on all sides. "Prove your charge, and do not wait for entreaty."

"Name the traitor, without more ado!" cried Francis, impatiently.

"Sire," said de Semblançay, "you know whether, for forty years, I have served my king with honor and loyalty."

"It gives me pleasure to remember it, my lord," said Francis.

"Your majesty knows," continued de Semblançay, "whether, during the necessities of the realm, I have hesitated to place at your disposal, my own fortune and the credit of my friends."

"I remember it all," said Francis, much doubting whither this preface tended.

"This faithful servant of your majesty," proceeded de Semblançay, "now kneels before you to say, that the felonious abstraction of a paper, which he thought was as safe as his own honor, and which has been stolen from him by he knows not whom—renders him liable to the implication of being himself a depredator of the funds of the kingdom, and of being, besides, a base impostor. So help me, Heaven, the paper, the written acknowledgment for these moneys, was in my possession, and I can testify to the character in which it was written. And when I sought to produce it, it was gone. Ah, sire, you will not, you cannot believe that I am practicing on your credulity or another's fame. You must not believe me guilty. You will never do so mortal a wrong to an old man whom, in the exuberance of your kindness, you have often called your father! You are the representative of God on the earth; and you, like Him from whom you hold your crown, will read my heart and save me from dishonor!"

"Rise, sir!" said Francis, in a severe tone of freezing contempt, "and never present yourself again in our hall until we command you to do so."

The old marshal's countenance denoted, that with those few words his heart had broken. He rose, however, with silence and dignity, and walked forth from the presence of the king. Alas! the unfortunate old man knew not then, that he was some years later to seal his testimony with his blood, a martyr to truth, from which fate neither his virtues nor his innocence could save him.

After de Semblançay was gone, Francis turned toward a group of gentlemen composed of the Constable's direst foes—Chabot de Biron, Bonnivet, Montchenu, and others.

"My lords," said he, "it devolves on you to avenge your dead brethren. I shall command in person the new army that will

cross the Alps, and Lyons shall be our general rendezvous. Bonnivet, I intrust to you the vanguard. Sieur de Lorges, you, at the head of twelve thousand men, will await me in Piedmont; nor shall you wait long. We will reconquer the Milanais, or the Imperialists shall see how a French king can die!"

"We are disgraced, my lord duke," said de Lantrec to the Constable, when they found themselves alone in the hall that the king and his court had just quitted.

"I will teach him, from the retirement of my villa of Moulins," replied de Bourbon, "that battles are not won by the aid of carpet knights and courtiers!"

THE END OF BOOK I.

BOOK SECOND.

THE DEFECTION.....PART I

A YEAR had scarcely elapsed since the humiliation of de Semblançay, and already the parliament, subservient to the queen-mother, had passed sentence of sequestration against the Constable.

Bourbon retired to his chateau of Moulins, where he dwelt with sad reminiscence on his departed splendor; and, in the leisure which his unmerited disgrace forced on him, he criticised severely the qualities of those men to whom Francis had confided the expedition into Milanais.

Moulins itself was changed. The sounds of revelry no longer echoed through its ancient halls, where the flower of the French nobility had so often feasted. Solitude reigned through the sombre area of its gardens, hitherto enlivened by sparkling fountains, and by courtiers flaunting in embroideries of velvet and gold. The old marble fauns, mossgrown and partly hid by the unpruned branches of the majestic trees, seemed to sleep on their pedestals, forgotten as the faces of one's ancestors on the slabs of the sepulchre.

But the aspect of everything was changed for the better, when a gentleman, covered with the dust of rapid travelling, burst into the duke's saloon, to inform him that the king in person would pay him a visit before he passed the Alps. De Bourbon's face and manner at once resumed their wonted serenity; the gardens smiled again; couriers, freighted with letters, ploughed the routes of the Bourbonnais; and a concourse of knights and dames filled, as if by enchantment, the deserted chambers of the chateau.

De Bourbon, at the close of a tournament, in which the king himself had borne a part, had just quitted his sovereign at the threshold of the suite of sumptuous apartments prepared for his majesty, when he encountered in one of the galleries of the chateau, a train of his own officers, just arrived to proffer to him their homage. Among the number, was Ponthus de Saint Romain, a young man, and an enthusiastic herald of the Constable's glory—whose favor with the duke, however, was maliciously attributed to the special interest taken by his grace in the welfare of Susan de Langenfeld. At the chateau of Moulins, as well as at the hotel des Tournelles, it was generally believed that Saint Romain, like a skillful and discreet courtier, understood, without perceiving, the motives of the duke's friendship toward himself; and, to confess the truth, it must be admitted that these whispered scandals assumed a tone of additional bitterness, from the fact that they originated in envy, and not in a love of virtue. M. de Beaurain, son of the Count de Roeulx, and M. de Frundsberg, a colonel of the lasquenets, were also in the train. These two gentlemen, placed near the duke by Charles V. himself, sought every opportunity to irritate him against Francis, and attach him to the emperor's party in France.

"Well, sirs!" cried the Constable, at least affecting a tone of hilarity, "think you, the king is pleased with our poor entertainment?"

"Nay, my lord," answered de Beaurain; "it is only too magnificent; as at present appointed, the chateau of Moulins is in no wise inferior to the hotel des Tournelles."

"And I reckon," added de Frundsberg, "that the duchess and her parliament will be ready to die with vexation at your success."

And yet," rejoined the Constable, "they hoped to degrade me by despoiling me of my lands and pensions; and forcing me, a prince of the blood-royal, to show myself before Frenchmen in the humiliating position of a younger brother, ruined by ill-habits! Saint Barbe! they shall be disappointed, though! So long as a family jewel, or a piece of plate, remains at my disposal, I will appear, as I have ever done, with the splendor befitting my rank."

The duke relapsed into a revery, from which, after a few moments, Saint Romain aroused him, saying:

"Do you suspect, my lord, the king's motives in this visit?"

"'Fore God!" cried the duke, carelessly, "I suppose he thinks that an outrage still festering in a heart like mine, promises no good to his kingdom and authority, when, by crossing the Alps, he shall have left a part of them defenceless behind him."

De Beaurain, with a look of intelligence to Frundsberg, rejoined:

"At the court of the Emperor Charles, where I passed my youth, my lord duke, such an outrage could never have been put upon a warrior of your rank and services. Would you had been born a subject of the emperor! But," added he, in a lower tone, "why will you not now become one? You might be second in the empire; and Charles would not deem even a crown too great a reward for him, with whose aid he could conquer the world!"

These words wrested a sigh from de Bourbon.

"Oh, Francis!" he exclaimed, "a young lion, when I beheld thee at Marignan; how hast thou become a lamb, whom a woman governs at will! One word from her suffices to blot from your mind the remembrance of all my victories. To-day, for one of her tears, you will wrest from me my titles and my fortune; and who knows that to-morrow you will not give her my head for a smile!"

"Speak but the word, my lord," hazarded Frundsberg, "and to-morrow you shall be invested with the command of the imperial army of Italy."

"Are you," said the duke, looking him full in the eye, and assuming a tone that seemed to demand a more direct explanation, "are you, my lord, officially empowered to make that proposal?"

De Beaurain, at this moment, approached the Constable, and drawing a letter, bearing the imperial signet, half out from his pourpoint, answered for de Frundsberg,

"We are the bearers of his majesty's commission!"

De Bourbon started involuntarily, and, clasping his hands upon his head, exclaimed:

"My head is bewildered!—To crush these wretches—humiliate Francis—fill the world with the story of my revenge ——"

"And of your shame, my lord!" boldly interrupted Saint Romain, though he turned pale, as he uttered the words. "My lord," continued he, "let the remembrance of your ancestors preserve you from dishonor. They died for their king and for France! Pierre de Bourbon, at Poictiers—Jacques, and his son Pierre, at Brignay—Louis, at Agincourt—and François, at Marignan!"

The emissaries of the emperor saw that de Bourbon hesitated, and de Beaurain hastened to rejoin:

"In addition to the command of his armies, with which he now invests you, my lord," said he, "the emperor engages to erect forthwith, into a kingdom, the estates of Bourbon, to which Provence and Dauphiny shall be added. He also offers you, in marriage, the hand of his sister, the Princess Leonora, and agrees to make her heiress both of himself and his brother, the arch-duke Ferdinand, in case of their default of male issue. See, my lord duke! all this is written and subscribed by the emperor's own hand!"

The constable seized the letter, and read it through in silence. All anxiously awaited his reply; and Saint Romain, with his hands clasped together, stood in a supplicating posture, as if conjuring his master to remember his allegiance and his honor.

De Bourbon, after a pause, returned the letter to de Beurain.

"What says my lord?" whispered the latter.

"I refuse," said the duke, coldly.

At this instant, the king was announced; and as he entered, he did not fail to observe, though he could not understand, the traces of the Constable's recent emotion.

The king had undertaken the journey to Moulins to satisfy himself as to the truth of certain reports, accusing the constable of lending a favorable ear to the designs of the emperor's partisans, who, it was rumored, sought to effect a division while the French troops were engaged beyond the Alps. The brow of Francis lowered as he beheld de Beaurain and Frundsberg; but he immediately recovered himself, and touching the Constable's hand, said:

"I am proud, cousin, of the hospitality you have vouchsafed to me. As I am a gentleman, a crowned king could not have entertained me more royally."

"I cannot thank the loving-kindness and forbearance of your parliament, my lord," said de Bourbon, quietly, "that I have yet a bed to offer your majesty. As it chances, however, the raft of my fortune is not so sundered and broken, but we still have a plank to rest foot upon."

"Before you abandon yourself entirely to that plank, my cousin," replied the king, "it would be wise to ascertain if it have sufficient strength to bear you in safety."

"Sire," returned de Bourbon, "Providence watches over us all."

"I trust it will protect you, sir," said the

king. "Before I leave you—for my duties forbid me to prolong the pleasure of enjoying your hospitality beyond this day—I desire a few words with you alone."

"I shall hold myself in readiness at your majesty's leisure," said de Bourbon.

"It is well, my lord," said the king. "The Admiral de Bonnivet," he continued, "de Brion, and other of our friends, have just alighted at your gates. May I hope, my lord, that you will see them well received and kindly entertained, for my sake?"

The duke replied by a respectful gesture.

"I could wish, cousin," added the king, "that if either of us should one day fail in his duty to the other, the world may be able to judge clearly on which side loyalty and honor remained."

"The French know, sire," answered de Bourbon, proudly, "that if I have ever failed in aught, it has not been in loyalty nor in honor!"

The king descended to the gardens, speaking in a low tone to the gentlemen who accompanied him; and the court-yard resounded with the pawing of the horses that had borne hither the admiral and his suite. The Constable commissioned Saint Romain to do the honors of his mansion to the new comers, and retired to his own apartment, commanding that he should not be interrupted on any pretext whatever.

Saint Romain descended to receive the new guests of his illustrious master. A splendid repast was spread for them in one of the galleries; the walls of which were garnished with pictures by the best masters, representing the exploits that had rendered de Bourbon's ancestors famous: and when the guests were assembled, not one of them, as he seated himself in front of these pictures, could deny in his conscience, that the absent Constable was more glorious than all these consecrated heroes.

It needed the express commands of de Bourbon, to induce Saint Romain to remain in this company, whom he well knew to be the inveterate foes of his master, and the authors of his disgrace. Here sate Bonnivet, who had superseded him in the government of Guyenne, and the command of the army of Italy; Chabot de Brion, who pretended to vie with the most skillful general in France, in the art of war; Montchenu, the king's steward, who also affected the captain and the conqueror; Perrot de Warty, Ligny, and a host of youths, scarcely out of their time as pages, who, to ingratiate themselves with the courtiers of Tournelles, improved on every insult offered to the Constable by the flatterers of the queen-mother.

Smothering in his own breast the scorn and hatred that he felt for these intriguers, Saint Romain endeavored to acquit himself honorably as master of ceremonies for the occasion. From the time that this frank and loyal young man, by enjoying the patronage and favor of the duke, had conceived toward his master the sentiment of gratitude, combined with a sincere and profound admiration; it had been the purpose of his life to obey the slightest command of the constable, and to accede to his most trivial wishes, even before they were expressed. The love he bore his wife, was the only passion that occupied his heart, in company with his devotion to the duke. Educated far from the court, little conversant with the language of courtiers, which, under the disguise of compliment and respect, convey both calumny and insult, Saint Romain conversed with these new guests for some time, without being aware that every sentence they uttered was a jest at his own or the duke's expense.

The interlocutors, emboldened by the stoicism with which their remarks were received, and perhaps excited by their free libations of Spanish wine, rent the veil of illusion in so many places, that at last the object of their raillery was forced to see the bearing of their language.

The key to the conversation being thus obtained, Saint Romain now read in the very smiles of the aggressors, what before he had not comprehended from their words. At this juncture, one of the guests related, without naming the actors, but with sufficiently distinct indications to enable any one to recognize them, the adventure of Madam de Saint Romain and the Constable in the rue Saint Antoine, as he had heard it from the admiral; and Perrot de Warty, not to be outdone in the matter, accompanied the recital by a commentary that made Saint Romain leap from his chair, exasperated beyond all power of endurance.

"Insolent calumniator!" cried he, rushing toward de Warty with uplifted sword, "I will chastise you as your baseness deserves!"

But the young Count de Ligny threw himself between them, and arrested Saint Romain's arm.

"Nay, by Heaven, let him come on!" cried de Warty, who had now drawn his sword. "I have revealed a wonderful secret, have I not? I should like to know where the devil you will find a man in this hall, not even excepting the honest, harm-

less Bourbonnais husband himself, who knows not that Madam de Saint Romain is the mistress of the Constable de Bourbon!"

Saint Romain shook off the grasp of de Ligny, as he would have brushed a wasp from his sleeve; and with one thrust of his sword, before which the guard of de Warty was but as a wisp of straw, he pierced his antagonist entirely through the body.

The wounded man fell to the floor, and the guests surrounded and bore him to an adjoining apartment; but he was not dead, and as they were carrying him out, he said:

"All this does not hinder Madam de Saint Romain from being the Constable's mistress."

It was fortunate for the speaker that, in the confusion, Saint Romain's sword had been wrested from him by the guests, who now all retired, leaving Saint Romain and the admiral alone in the hall.

"My lord admiral," said the incensed husband, "one of your suite has publicly insulted me: he must as publicly retract the insult, or, on my honor, I will appeal for justice to the king!"

"Far be it from me," replied Bonnivet, "to excuse the conduct of poor de Warty: I admit that he was grossly in the wrong, and he has at least endured a severe penalty in return. But beware, for your own sake, how you make this a subject of complaint to the king."

"I do not comprehend your proposition, my lord," said Saint Romain, taking up his sword, which had been thrown on the table in the melée; "but I shall go to the king."

"I pray you to be calm," returned Bonnivet, taking Saint Romain by the arm. "Do not expose this affair. Do not make yourself a gazing-stock to the court, always greedy for scandal. Such mishaps are common: they have befallen many an honest and brave man before. And besides, since you affirm the innocence of your wife, I am willing to believe you ignorant of her guilt."

"You, sir, are ignorant of it, and so is all the world," replied Saint Romain, impetuously. "My wife is prudent and spotless, and you well know that the Duke de Bourbon is an honorable man."

"Nevertheless," insinuated the admiral, "if you had proofs——"

"There can be no proofs of her dishonor," cried Saint Romain resolutely, though the admiral's manner disturbed him not a little.

"It remains only for yourself to decide," replied Bonnivet, "whether you will be convinced this day, this hour, this moment!"

Saint Romain was thunderstruck at this declaration, and at the tone in which it was uttered. A sudden humiliation seemed to threaten him in some vague, intangible, and therefore terrifying form, and he felt himself by some incomprehensible agency rapidly transformed from an indignant champion, to a party doubtful of his own rights and suspicious of his own integrity.

"Proofs! this day! this hour!" he repeated slowly to himself. "But, no!" he added, determined to resist such insupportable imaginings, "say no more, my lord admiral! I wish to know nothing, seek nothing, investigate nothing: and indeed I fear nothing, save that my own prejudiced judgment should be deluded by some ingeniously contrived artifice."

The admiral was baffled, but not defeated, by this manly and direct avowal.

"One thing at least," he said, "I will apprise you of. Madam de Saint Romain, whom you believe to be in Paris, occupied with her duties to the Duchess d'Angoulême, has, since yesterday, been concealed under an assumed name, in a house hard by this chateau of Moulins. Yesterday," he added, after a pause, which the stunned Saint Romain had no power to break, "she sent a letter to the Constable by an old gipsy-woman, who came hither with the pretext of soliciting charity."

"Where is this woman—this gipsy?" stammered Saint Romain.

"You shall see her," replied Bonnivet; "and, if you desire it, she shall conduct you to the rendezvous appointed with the Constable, in the letter she brought."

At this moment, a gentle knock was heard at a side-door of the hall: the admiral opened it, and an old woman entered, whom he conducted to the side of Saint Romain, and he himself then quitted the hall.

The husband of Susan de Langenfeld, who was leaning for support against the back of an arm-chair, gazed at the aged apparition as if it had been a spectre evoked from the tomb. Calamity and sorrow, even more than years, seemed to have withered her features, which, however, retained some traces of former beauty; while her haughty brow and flashing eye contrasted strangely with the poverty of her apparel.

"Who are you?" demanded Saint Romain.

"A wretched woman, whom the brave Duke de Bourbon ordered to be scourged in the streets of Paris, a year since," re-

plied she: "were you one of the company?"

"I was not," said Saint Romain, "but what if I were? Have you anything to tell me?"

"Your friends," answered the woman, "have called me an Italian sorceress: if I am such, I should know what you wish to know."

"Can you show me what you have told to others?" demanded Saint Romain.

"As surely as my curses shall follow, to the latest moment of his existence, Charles de Bourbon, and all who aided his massacres of the Milanese," answered the woman, fiercely—"so surely, I can prove all that I have said."

"Pause before you undertake it!" said Saint Romain, solemnly: "for, if you deceive me, you shall die on the spot!"

"I know it," replied the gipsy.

"Do you say, then," said Saint Romain, breathing hard, and speaking with great effort, "do you say that Madam de Saint Romain is now holding an interview with the Constable de Bourbon?"

"You may see them with your own eyes," said the gipsy, decidedly.

"How did you learn this?" said Saint Romain.

"I, myself," replied the gipsy, boldly, "accompanied her to Moulins. When she hesitated, I persuaded her: when she trembled, I encouraged her."

"By Heaven, you shall rue this!" cried Saint Romain.

"*He* shall rue it!" said the gipsy, "he, the murderer of my children! To be her guide, to induce her to place herself under my escort, I told your wife that I was poor, and she hired me and gave me money: hearts that love are so open to pity! To gain her confidence, I avowed my sympathy and counterfeited tears; and then she pressed my wrinkled brow with her lips—those rosy lips that give such balmy kisses!"

"Begone, accursed sorceress!" cried Saint Romain, in a transport of rage. "Yet, stay!" he added irresolutely, "stay. Give me your hand. My eyes are bewildered and I cannot trust them. Will you lead me to the place of this interview?"

"Willingly, my lord," cried the gipsy, grasping his arm with both her hands, "and you will punish her for your dishonor, will you not? Your sword is at your side? Yes! that is well. But touch not her seducer. A higher arm than yours must strike *him*. I, with all my hatred and all my watchfulness, have never been able to reach him. Have you not beheld within his eyes, and on his brow, the seal of his destiny?—an infernal star that leads onward to a strange and unknown future? Know you not, that men like him are sent as beacons and warnings to mankind? adored and accursed idols, that at length are struck down from their pedestals by the thunderbolt? For ten years I have dogged his paths, and some day his time will come—the hour of retribution—when an instant of joy will recompense me for a life of tears!"

"Woman!" exclaimed Saint Romain, whose sympathies were touched by the enthusiasm of her passion, "you hate him well!"

"Thus will you hate him," she said, "when you know the extent of your wrongs."

"Lead on!" said Saint Romain, impatiently; "we have already wasted time. But beware you do not deceive me!"

They left the hall, and at the same time, from an opposite side, Bonnivet entered, followed by de Brion.

"All goes well!" said one to the other. "Let us on and relate it to the king."

While these events were passing, a veiled female had been cautiously ushered into the private apartment of the Constable, who was not long in joining her.

At the time when Saint Romain and the gipsy were about leaving the hall where they first met, the Duke de Bourbon was walking in an elegant gallery adjoining his own apartment, accompanied by a lady, who sought to detain him.

"Will you go so soon?" said the lady, in a tone of reproach.

"I must do so," answered the Constable, "for the king is ready to depart, and his command that I should speak with him was urgent. Do not detain me."

"Nay," said the lady; "my own safety counsels me also to flee, for I may be surprised here, at any moment. And yet, I linger."

"That," said the Constable, "is because you are an angel of kindness. But, in sooth, we must part now."

"Farewell, my lord," said the lady; "I know not why, but the gloomy feelings that now oppress me, make me tremble with fear. My love has linked me to you, de Bourbon, as the ivy is linked to the oak. Separate us, and I die. You know the old astrologer, whom you sometimes consult, has predicted that we shall perish together."

The Constable endeavored to reanimate her; and, imprinting a kiss on her forehead, withdrew. The lady advanced toward a small door, half concealed by the

tapestry. As she was about to open it, it was moved by another hand, and Saint Romain stood before her! Susan uttered a cry of terror, and rushed toward another door, but her husband seized her arm.

"Not that way, madam!" cried he, in a stifled tone. "The king and his suite are there. Hush! Come with me. I will at least spare you the ignominy of meeting them."

They withdrew; and immediately the king, attended by the Constable, and the gentlemen of his train, entered the apartment.

THE DEFECTION.....PART II.

"We will waive etiquette, cousin," said Francis to de Bourbon. "I was weary with waiting on your leisure, and have come to take leave of you."

"Indeed, my liege, I am sorry——" began the Constable; but his impatient kinsman would not allow him to finish his apology.

"By the faith of a gentleman, my lord duke," cried the king, "we have had time to accustom ourselves to your haughty caprices; so, say no more upon the matter. But before putting foot in stirrup, I would speak with you touching something that concerns us both."

The king made a sign, at which his attendants withdrew, and he then threw himself into an arm-chair, requesting de Bourbon to do the same.

The Constable seated himself a few steps from the king, saying:

"Speak, sire, and I will listen."

"In a few days," said Francis, "I shall have crossed the Alps; and in a few months, I trust I shall have reconquered Milanais. The Italian League proposes, by uniting with the emperor, to resist me; but this will be a vain effort. I will destroy the League; I will chastise the pope, for his hostile preaching; I will hold Venice to ransom, for having purchased peace from Austria; and as for Genoa, Florence, Sienna and Lucca, that brood of young Italian serpents, that the eagle of Charles V. has hatched under its wings, they shall repent of having lifted up their heads. I do not shrink from encountering, at one and the same time, the English in Picardy and the German lasquenets in Burgundy. Be their numbers what they may, I have never feared the swords of my enemies when they are drawn in open day. But when, under the guise of loyalty, traitors whet their poniards in the dark; when Frenchmen, who are intrusted with the keys of my provinces, desire my absence that they may open my gates to the foe—these, my lord, are the things that I fear, and these are the men that I pronounce infamous!"

As the king spoke these words, in an excited tone, he struck his clenched fist on the arm of the chair in which he sat, and looked fixedly in the constable's face. That nobleman, however, did not shrink from his gaze.

"Sire," he replied, quietly, "if you have proof that any Frenchman has conceived such a design, why do you hesitate to punish him, be his rank what it may?"

"Cousin," replied the king, somewhat disconcerted by this bold, direct question, "your counsel in this matter has great weight with us. I confess it has cost me great pain to suspect of treason men who are in the first rank of my nobility."

"The dominions of France, my lord," answered de Bourbon, with the tone of audacity that was habitual to him, "hold no traitors but such as may be found among the courtiers of the king. If," continued he, in a tone of reckless indifference, "you see fit to heed my counsel—which has such weight with you—so much the worse for them: if you disregard it, so much the worse for yourself!"

The king, with an angry impulse, moved his chair toward de Bourbon.

"Is there one among those courtiers," said he sternly, "who can, like you, my lord duke, be accused of entertaining at his house discontented men and suspicious foreigners? If the Marshal de Lautrec desires to insult my mother, he comes to you. If de Beaurain and Frundsberg, the avowed spies of the emperor, desire to obtain influence in France, who entertains them? You, sir! who make them your most intimate advisers. Are not my friends as free from imputation as yours? But, my lord," he added bitterly, "you would envy them less, did you recall to mind that the first act of my royalty was to bestow on you the Constable's sword, once worn with so much honor by your grandfather, Jean de Bourbon."

The Constable sprang to his feet, and in turn striking his chair with his clenched fist, replied, "You forget, sire, that I gained this sword by certain poor services in Mi-

lanais, in Guyenne, and in Burgundy; and that a few months after you bestowed it, I cleansed its blade from rust in the blood of the Swiss at Marignan."

"I acknowledge, my lord," said Francis, waving his hand to the Constable that he might resume his seat—"I acknowledge, that on that occasion I was indebted to you for both victory and life, and I shall never cease to remember it. If, my brave cousin, some clouds have, since that period, intervened between us, I desire now to brush them away. Come! let a mutual reconciliation cement our renewed friendship. Charles, your possessions shall be restored to you, and I will add to them new proofs of my favor. During my absence, you shall take orders from my mother, whom I have appointed regent. You I will invest with the lieutenancy of the realm. But, in return, I demand that you shall forego your rancor, revive our former project, and accept the Duchess d'Angoulême for your wife. Your hand, Charles! give me your hand."

"Never, sir!" replied the duke, with an air of inexpressible disdain.

The king rose. "Pause, sir!" cried he. "I have pledged my word to this in your behalf."

"It matters not," said the Constable; "for, sooner than wed that woman, I would espouse myself to damnation!"

"Hold!" said Francis; "not another word of her! remember that you speak of my mother!"

But the bare mention of the name of the duchess, in such a connection, had excited the Constable's indignation to the utmost; and in defiance of consequences, he went on:

"A woman," continued he, "who, through her base and infamous pander, Duprat, has exposed to sale every office of trust and profit in the kingdom!"

The king turned pale with rage.

"Hold your peace, sir!" he cried, raising his hand with a menacing gesture.

"A woman," persisted de Bourbon, recklessly, "whose avarice and cupidity would coin into money the very crown and sceptre of France!"

"You insult me, sir!" cried Francis, entirely beside himself with anger, and he accompanied his words with a blow on the Constable's cheek.

In the twinkling of an eye, and by an instinctive impulse that nothing could resist, the sword of de Bourbon flew from its scabbard; but, fortunately for both, a door of the gallery was thrown open at the same instant, and twenty gentlemen stood between the enraged cousins. For some moments, not a word was spoken, though at a sign from de Brion, a company of halberdiers barred all egress from the apartment. Bonnivet was the first who ventured to break the silence.

"Has your majesty," said he, with a sinister glance at the Constable, "any commands for me?"

"I called no one, my lord admiral," said Francis with forced calmness; "but, since we are ready for departure, sound to horse! Before a fortnight is past, we will give full employment to our foes under the walls of Milan."

The crowd dispersed; the doors of the gallery were closed, and no one remained with the duke but a few officers of his household.

"A blow!" exclaimed he, sheathing his sword and convulsively grasping the hand of Tausannes; "a blow, Tausannes, and I killed him not!"

At this moment Frundsberg entered the apartment.

"Can you believe this?" cried the Constable, addressing the new comer: "a blow, and I killed him not!"

"A blow calls for vengeance, my lord!" answered Frundsberg.

"I will have vengeance!" exclaimed de Bourbon: "full vengeance! ample vengeance! before God I swear I will have vengeance! My faithful Pomperant," added he, rushing toward the captain of his guard, who now entered; "I have been dishonored, Pomperant, by a blow! Gentlemen, all of you," he continued to his followers, who now flocked around him, "see on my cheek the yet glowing impression of the king's hand! Des Escures, de Beaumont, d'Espina, Varennes, if you would see how the king rewards the service of his noblesse, look here!"

A general burst of indignation followed these words.

"I," said de Beauvain, after a momentary silence was obtained, "will return, and report this to the emperor."

"You shall not go alone!" cried the Constable, and his followers answered by assuring him that they were all at his disposal.

The Constable folded his arms, dropped his head on his breast, and for a few moments paced the floor of the hall in silence; at length he raised his head, and looking deliberately around, as if to address each one of his suite personally, he said,

"This night, gentlemen, I quit the soil of France!"

"And we, my lord, will accompany you," was the unanimous response.

"De Beaurain," said the Constable, resolutely, "give me again the emperor's conditions!"

That officer took from his bosom a letter, and handed it respectfully to the duke; who, after carefully reading it, strode hurriedly around the hall, exclaiming,

"The die is cast! The King has forced this upon me, and now let God judge between us!"

As he pronounced these words, the crowd made way for some one just arrived, and presently an old man approached the Constable.

"Saint Vallier!" cried the latter, "have you come to partake my fortunes?" But perceiving that the old man, instead of making reply, stood looking at him in silence, he added, "Do not hope to dissuade me; my resolution is taken."

"You must hearken to me, nevertheless," replied the old man: and without delay the two retired to an adjoining chamber.

Jean de Poictiers, lord of Saint Vallier, captain of a hundred men-at-arms, and chevalier of the order of the king, was allied to the house of Bourbon. He was aware of the snares that surrounded the Constable; knew that Francis had sought the late interview to propose anew the marriage with the Duchess d'Angoulême, and foresaw the result. He threw himself on his knees before de Bourbon, and, with streaming eyes, besought him to abandon his determination, to consider the dishonor he would bring upon himself, and the innumerable calamities he was about to inflict on France. Bourbon was evidently shaken by the old man's entreaties.

"What would you have me do?" said he, raising Saint Vallier from the floor. "They have wrested everything from me; and in France I have nothing and am nothing. Nay, by Heaven, I am fallen so low that you, by coming hither, have incurred the risk of their vengeance—if your virtues and services had not already entitled you to that distinction! Go, Saint Vallier! Remember that you are the father of a family and have a beloved daughter, Diana de Poictiers, whom the corruption of the hotel des Tournelles has not yet assailed. Hide her, my lord, from the eyes of the king; and hide in the deepest recesses of your noble heart the friendship you bear me, for even that will be imputed to you as a crime, which you must one day expiate, as I have been called to expiate the victories I have won!"

This warning, however, did not induce Saint Vallier to relax his efforts to reclaim the Constable; nor would he quit the chateau until the latter had promised not to pursue his purposes without a further consultation with him,

As soon as Saint Vallier retired, the duke returned to the hall, where he found his partisans impatiently awaiting his orders for departure.

"We must not lose an instant," said he hastily. "My lord de Beaurain," he added, "I accept your conditions; and, in return, I will now present you with my own obligation. Let some one request Saint Romain to bring my ducal seal."

"I was about to surrender it to your highness," replied the husband of Susan de Langenfeld, in a hollow voice, and advancing slowly into the middle of the now thronged apartment. He was pale and depressed, though an ominous fire shot from beneath his eyelids; but the excitement of the passing events had prevented any one from remarking his altered manner, which would otherwise have been observable on his first entrance into the hall. The duke handed to him the paper he had received from de Beaurain, saying:

"Take this, my faithful friend: it is my head that I intrust to your guardianship! And now, seat yourself at that table, and write what I shall dictate."

"I cannot, my lord!" replied Saint Romain.

"Ha!" cried the Constable in astonishment; "can you be false to me, Saint Romain!"

"I shall presently leave your chateau, my lord, never to enter it again," answered the young man.

A murmur of surprise ran through the crowd at these words. No one was ignorant of the many favors conferred by the Constable on this young man, who had entered the service of his present master with no other fortune than his sword; and his brethren in arms now pressed around him with urgent entreaties that he would retract his words: but, on the contrary, he repeated them in a high, distinct tone, so that all might hear. They replied to him with reproaches, and asked if he were afraid? He answered by a shrug of the shoulders, and was about to withdraw, when the Constable inquired the reason of this change of purpose.

"Since *you* require me to speak, my lord," said Saint Romain, turning again, "I will explain myself; and I entreat you all, gentlemen, to listen. That you are my benefactor, my lord, every one here

knows full well. The office and honors I enjoy were conferred by you. I do not wear a jewel nor a vesture, but has been bestowed on me by you. But while granting me these vain baubles, you have exacted from me a price which far exceeds their value: you have taken from me a treasure that you cannot restore: my lord, you have robbed me of my honor! You, gentlemen, who listen, have perhaps thought me base enough coolly to estimate the love of my wife, and deliberately to barter it for preferment in his highness's household. But God is my witness, that, until this day, I knew not how my unsuspicious confidence has been abused! that, until this day, I have not comprehended the meaning of those sarcasms, which more than one of you have levelled at me with impunity. I forgive you, gentlemen! I restore to my lord, the duke, all I have ever received from him. In return, I ask only for your esteem: I desire to carry nothing else with me from the chateau of Moulins! Adieu, gentlemen: you will see me no more! Adieu, my lord: may heaven protect your glory!"

No effort was made to detain Saint Romain as he strode quietly, and in silence, through the hall; though every eye followed, with the respectful and mute admiration that honorable actions always command.

The Constable was painfully affected by a scene in which he played so indifferent a part; but he had no leisure to give way to his emotions. His heart was bleeding at so many points that he soon lost the consciousness of any individual wound.

Montagnac-Tausannes now entered, booted and spurred, saying:

"My horses are at the door, my lord, and I set forth for Germany. If heaven prosper us, de Langenfeld and I will soon join you under the walls of Milan. May your good star still guide you, my lord!" he added, kissing the Constable's hand as he retired.

Pomperant entered as Tausannes departed. He was accompanied by de Beaurain and Frundsberg.

"My lord," said he, "all the gold and treasure remaining in the chateau has been collected together, and your officers have thrown their savings into your coffers, reserving nothing to themselves but their arms."

"It is all well," replied the duke. "We must not allow the king to anticipate us; and, for better security, let us separate. Let each one gain, as he can, the territory of the emperor in Franche-Comté. And now, I swear never to sheathe my sword, until Francis de Valois has entreated me to pardon him! And, further, that I may not forget my oath, I will cause a flaming sword to be emblazoned on my standard, with the word *Esperance* beneath it!"

While the constable and his partisans were making arrangements to depart, Saint Romain left the chateau on foot, dressed in a simple habit of cloth, his sword by his side, and not one servant following him: in the same costume, five years before, he had solicited the patronage of the Constable. As he reached the boundaries of the garden, he cast one glance at the chateau: then shaking the dust from his feet, he turned and disappeared in the thick shadows of the forest, without knowing where to direct his steps.

He had walked for nearly an hour, when he was stopped by a woman on horseback, who was riding on at full speed. He shuddered as he recognized the gipsy who had revealed to him his wife's infidelity.

"So!" said the woman, checking her horse, "Susan still lives! Feeble and timorous man, who dared not punish her!"

"She struggled so hard," replied Saint Romain, gloomily, "and besought me to spare her in such piteous tones, that I suffered her to escape!"

"Yes! that she might fly with her paramour!" retorted the gipsy. "Well," she added, "at least, *his* ruin is sure. Come, and see how his destiny impels him to the abyss—the traitor! the murderer of my children! To-morrow, the victor of Marignan, will be but a rebel, whose head will rot on the gibbet of Montfauçon."

"Woman," said Saint Romain, "dethroned sovereigns and demons can alone curse as you do: who are you?"

The gipsy, after pausing, as if to collect her thoughts, replied:

"My ancestors wore a crown, and were called the dukes of Milan. May that same crown, for which the king and the emperor now contend, shiver in their grasp and blast them both! This is the prayer of Cesara Visconti!"

A band of cavaliers, who formed a part of the king's suite, were now seen wending their way through the forest, in order to gain the highway from Moulins to Lyons. Cesara Visconti pushed her horse toward them.

"Whither are you going?" demanded Saint Romain, seizing her bridle.

"To reveal all to the king!" replied she, with a hollow laugh; "to destroy the Constable, and render his flight impossible."

"You shall not go!" said Saint Romain, resolutely.

"What!" cried she, "do you defend him?"

"God may strike him in His justice," replied Saint Romain; "and he well deserves the blow. But his glory belongs to his country. You advance no farther, until he is out of the reach of your vengeance."

The cavaliers soon disappeared. Saint Romain and the woman journeyed together as far as the next village, where the former hired a mule to enable him to escort his travelling-companion to Lyons.

THE END OF BOOK II.

BOOK THIRD.

THE HOUR OF VENGEANCE.....PART I.

"What's the hour, Diego?"

"Hark! count for yourself. It is two hours after midnight by the clock of the Chartreuse."

"Saint James of Compostella help us!" said the first speaker, turning himself on the bundle of straw that served him for a bed; "this is the very hour that the phantom which you and Numer saw last night, made its appearance!"

"Hush! do you see nothing under those dark arches of the church?"

"Only a ray of moonlight."

"How lucky these d— Lutherans are, to be able to sleep at such a time! If I ever see Spain again, I'll do penance for having lain so near them!"

"May Satan confound this new general the emperor has given us! He orders us to bivouac, side by side, with these heretic lasquenets!"

"This Bourbon believes in nothing—neither saints nor ghosts!"

"By the way, you saw this ghost—what was it like?"

"Faith, I know not, though I saw it as plainly as I see you!"

"It must have been the soul of some dead duke or king, that issues forth from one of the marble tombs in the church."

"No, that can't be; for it was a woman, and an old woman into the bargain, which makes the sign so much the worse. Besides, to-day is Friday!"

"Yes. Saint Matthias's day, the twenty-fourth of February, Anno Domini 1525. I warrant we shall have reason to remember it!"

"It will be a terrible day!"

"Only think of it! Bourbon fighting against the King of France!"

"Will you have a cup of this Lombardy wine?"

"No, I thank you: I am not thirsty."

"I feel a devilish cold chill creeping along my back! You may believe me or not: but I would rather be in the thickest of the battle than in a place where ghosts amuse themselves. Let us play at passe-dix, to while away the time. Where's your box? Here are my dice."

This conversation took place in the cathedral of the Chartreuse, not far from Pavia—where a few half-consumed torches lighted a bivouac of lasquenets and Spanish soldiers, formed by order of Charles de Bourbon, lieutenant-general of the armies of Charles V., in Milanais. Bundles of partizans, surrounded by standards blazoned with the double-headed eagle, reflected from their steel points the ruddy flame of the torches, while, beneath the volumes of eddying smoke that ascended toward the high arches of the church, were visible the tombs of the Visconti, the ancient dukes of Pavia and Milan.

These soldiers, collected from all quarters, followed the fortunes of the Constable, though not under his immediate command. The Marquis of Pescara was general of the Spanish infantry, and the Count of Lannoy, viceroy of Naples under the Emperor, led the Italian lances. The lasquenets alone belonged to de Bourbon, who had levied them himself in Germany, by means of certain moneys that he borrowed, after his flight, from the Duke of Savoy. These men, worshipping the prowess and genius of the illustrious fugitive, followed implicitly the behests of their adventurous chief, asking nothing from him but victory and pillage: they knew the emperor only by name, and their monarch was their general.

This compact of power, which gave to Pescara and Lannoy an authority at least equal to the Constable's, would have prevented the hearty coöperation and entire efficiency of the allied troops, had not de Bourbon, while enduring the jealousy of his colleagues, been willing to sacrifice his pride and a portion of his rights, to assure himself of revenge on the common enemy. Besides, he was, in effect, more truly the master of his colleagues' troops than they were themselves: for his superior fame, daring and genius, won, as they ever will, the admiration and attachment of the whole

army: and this is the true solution of the mystery, that a body of men composed of such incongruous materials as German Lutherans and Spanish Catholics, should have effected the conquest of Italy: the commanding talents of the Constable forced the discordant masses to coalesce.

The two soldiers, with whose discourse this chapter commenced, had pursued their game for some time, and in its excitement forgot their superstitious terrors; when suddenly one of them threw himself on his face, and grasping his rosary, cried,

"Speak not a word, or we are lost!"

At the same time, a woman, followed by a man wrapped in a cloak, traversed one of the upper galleries of the church. They stopped for a few moments, and the woman, bending over the railing of sculptured stone, extended her hand toward the sleeping soldiers: as she did so, the pipes of the organ, filled by a gust of wind, sent forth a supernatural sound. Diego ejaculated a litany, which caused the apparition to vanish, and Lopez, his companion, sprang to his feet, shouting with all his might,

"By our Lady of the Seven Pains, I will stay no longer among these heretics!"

The Spanish soldiers, suddenly aroused from sleep by their comrade's cries, determined to hold the lasquenets responsible for the disturbance created by this phantom. All rushed at once toward the stacked spears, and Captain Langenfeld, who strove to quell the fray, received a blow from Diego that nearly prostrated him. In the midst of the tumult, the beating of drums and the sound of trumpets were heard. Pescara and Lannoy rushed to the scene, followed by some gens-d'armes, who, however, only increased the confusion.

"Down with the generals!" shouted simultaneously the lasquenets and Spaniards, as soon as they saw these officers.

"Is it thus," demanded Lannoy indignantly, "that you serve the emperor?"

"We serve him as he pays us," replied one of the mutineers.

"For the whole six months we have served," cried another, "we have not had one rial among us."

"The Spaniards are right there," rejoined one of the lasquenets; "give us our pay!"

"Yes, our pay!" responded the multitude. "We will wait no longer. Pay, or fight for yourselves!"

"All is lost, my lord!" said Lannoy to Pescara, as he saw the ringleaders of the mutiny urging the troops to disband or go over to the French.

At the critical moment when sedition was ripening into open rebellion, a newcomer appeared, whose presence alone restored order. This was the Constable, without helmet or sword, clad in a simple leathern pourpoint, over which he had not paused even to buckle his cuirass. Pomperant was a step in advance of him, bearing his standard of yellow taffeta, strewn with flaming swords. Tausannes, Frundsberg, and a few of his officers followed him. The mutineers made way as he approached; and, thrusting himself into the midst of them, he shouted, in a voice of thunder:

"Call hither the grand-provost! Guards, secure the place, and let no one escape alive!"

Then, walking around among those whose clamor had been the loudest, he added, quietly:

"How is this, friends? Of a surety, I thought the French were in the camp. God be praised! I was in error. All seems quiet, my lords," added he, significantly, addressing himself to his colleagues. Then turning again to the soldiers, he continued:

"Comrades, you have risen early this morning; but the French king is ready for you under the walls of Pavia, and he will give you enough to do before you bivouac again. But heed it not. I am with you; and our old Spanish infantry, our lasquenets of the Rhine, with our Italians of Milan and Naples, are more than a match for the Swiss of Diespach and black bands of Lord Suffolk, who cannot fight unless their purses and bellies are both gorged. Is it not so, my brave fellows? Tell me, if it is not so!"

Diego came forward to the Constable, and taking off his cap, which he twisted awkwardly around in his hands, said:

"Illustrious signor, we do not assuredly fear either the Swiss or the black bands, as we think we have hitherto proved; but if it be just and right that we serve the emperor, so is it just and right that he both clothe and feed us. Yet, though we depend on our pay to protect ourselves from cold and hunger, your treasurers have for six months forgotten to give it us."

"Listen to me, comrades," said the Constable. "I am a poor cavalier, with no more money than yourselves: let us join our fortunes together. You have suffered in this campaign: your pourpoints are worn, your partizans and swords are injured by rust and rain, and your purses are as slender as is my credit. But look you: at the break of day, which will ere long be upon us, I will deliver to you the army of France—an army of fops and courtiers, whose cof-

fers are lined with ducats, whose horses are gayly caparisoned, whose caps are of velvet, and whose cloaks are embroidered; yea, their Florence armor contains more gold and silver than steel. All this, I aver, shall be yours: are you content?"

"Ay, ay! well content," shouted the soldiers: "combat and pillage are all we desire!"

"You will then follow me to the field," inquired the Constable, "where, in one battle, you can gain the pay of ten years' service?"

"Ay, ay! Lead on, general! Vive Bourbon!" was the reply.

"It is well," said the Constable. "You know I shall keep my word. Before the dawn, we will muster on the plain with our lances in rest."

"Vive Bourbon!" was repeated and re-echoed by the troops, and they at once quitted the bivouac to prepare for the field.

"Now, gentlemen," said the Constable to his colleagues and officers, after the troops had retired, "who knows anything of this phantom, which has conjured up a mutiny?"

"I presume, my lord," replied Langenfeld, "that it is an old woman, whom the monks have for some days sheltered in the convent hard by this cathedral."

"Who is she?" said the duke.

"None of us has seen her, my lord," answered Langenfeld; "but she is supposed to be a descendant of Giovanni Maria Visconti, Duke of Milan, who was assassinated in 1747. She is a lunatic, or little better, and avers that she is rightful heir to the crown usurped by Philip Maria, from whom the Sforzas hold title to it."

"These Viscontis," said the Constable, "are a race of bastards, whose innumerable heirs fill all Europe with their pretensions."

"True, my lord duke," said Lannoy; "but let us first drive the French to their own borders. We will afterward settle the question of legitimacy."

"Did I imagine," said the Constable, musing—"did I imagine that this convent would give us trouble, by harboring mad women or disaffected men, I would burn it to the ground on the instant." Then turning to Lannoy and Pescara, he continued: "First of all, my lords, we must raise the siege of Pavia. The French, lying now between the garrison of the town and our own troops, can no longer avoid a decisive engagement. It would seem that Francis, setting at nought the advice of his old captains, persists in risking both fortune and life on a single cast of the die. Saint Barbe! we should first thank Heaven for the king's valiant resolution, and afterward thank his counsellors, Bonnivet and the rest, for their sapient advice—in virtue of which we shall to-day obtain a brilliant victory. Francis boasts, as I learn, that he will subdue Pavia or die under its walls. But we will give the lie to this boast, by crushing his gend'armerie and taking the crowned braggadocio alive. But come, gentlemen, we are wasting time. Bid my squire bring hither my arms, de Langenfeld. We have friends to avenge who are lingering in the Bastile."

"Ay, my lord," replied de Pomperant, "and traitors to chastise. Saint Romain is in the king's camp."

"May God forgive him!" cried de Bourbon; "he is a brave man, and worthy to conquer with us. My lords," he continued, addressing Lannoy and Pescara, after a brief pause; "while you make head against the Duke d'Alençon and the Marshal de Chalannes, I will move with our main body against the king."

"Your pardon, Sieur de Bourbon," said Pescara, whose jealousy of the Constable revived the moment the danger of mutiny was over, and who now made common cause with his old enemy Lannoy, against his new and formidable rival; "you forget, sir, that Lannoy and myself share equally with you the authority of this command."

"He says true, my lord," added Lannoy, as the Constable drew himself up to make a hasty reply; "he says true, my lord Constable. Let each lead his respective division: you, your lasquenets; and we, our Spanish infantry and Italian lances. You must surely be content to share with your colleagues the victory which you promise, but which they must aid you to achieve."

It was a humiliating necessity that forced Charles de Bourbon to submit to such a rebuke from a man who was equally destitute of ability and courage, and who owed his position solely to the favoritism of the emperor. But as the duke had schooled himself to defer every other passion of his soul, to the one purpose of vengeance, he exhibited no emotion at this address, but replied, simply:

"Be it as you will, my lords." And with these words, his colleagues and officers departed to their several preparations, and he remained alone in the cathedral.

The day that soon would dawn, was in its course to crown the destiny of this heroic rebel; and Europe, as judge of the field, was to pronounce its decision between the rival cousins. The loss or gain to either must be prodigious: Francis staked his life and crown; Bourbon his revenge

The mighty past, the perilous present, and the unknown future, held the Constable for a time in profound meditation; but at length, recurring to the late interview, he said aloud:

"These men are envious of me. But what matters it! After enduring insult, contumely and wrong, at the hands of Bonnivet and his satellites, it imports little that I sustain the frivolous impertinence of Spanish courtiers. Ah, Charles, Charles! emperor and king at once—whose double-headed eagles hold sway over two continents and two seas—you alone are happy! You hold the power that rules, and the sword that punishes. How glorious is it to pronounce from the elevation of a throne the words, I WILL IT! Alas! the power that we receive on bended knee, and which, poor as it is, jealousy and hatred would rob us of, is it worth the pains of procuring? Well! we can but work out our destiny. If it is good to wear a crown, it is glorious to conquer one, even though we gain the prize for another!"

Here, he stepped to the embrazure of a window in the cathedral, and throwing open the sash, gazed abroad on the sky.

"Francis," he continued, "at this moment God spreads before us the book in which our names are written; which of the two is to be effaced? The heavens are bright, and if those constellations speak truth, I shall this day win the most glorious of victories."

The duke's squires now entered, bearing his armor; and Pomperant and Frundsberg came to take their orders.

"De Frundsberg," said he, "are the men making ready?"

"They are donning their white surcoats, my lord," said his officer, "so that they can know each other in the darkness."

"You are prompt then, and I thank you," replied the duke. "As for myself, my surcoat of gold will sufficiently distinguish me. Come, sirs, dispatch," added he, to his squires.

They proceeded accordingly to buckle on his armor; and the instant that he felt the weight of the steel on his breast, his occasional despondency gave place to the stern resolution of the warrior. As the task of the squires was completed, Pomperant whispered in his ear,

"My lord, a person who is about to quit the camp and return to France, desires to speak with you."

"Who is the person?" inquired the duke, "and what is the purport of the visit? If it do not bear relation to the duties of the day, I have no leisure to listen."

"Nevertheless, my lord," said Pomperant, with hesitation——

"What is the name of this person?" interrupted the Constable.

"Madam de Saint Romain," answered Pomperant.

"And does she think," rejoined the duke, "that when two armies are about to meet on a field like this, I have leisure to hear a woman's complaints? Say that I cannot receive her."

But Susan herself entered as he pronounced these words.

"My lord," said she, in a faint voice, "grant me but a few moments. I will not detain you long."

"What would you, madam?" asked the duke, coldly.

"Alas, my lord!" said Susan, "I would have your pity."

"And is this a moment," pursued the Constable, in the same tone; "is this a moment, when victory and carnage fill every soul, to talk of pity? This, madam, is no place for a woman." But immediately he added, with a milder accent, "I entreat you, Susan, to leave me."

"Oh, Heaven!" cried the unfortunate lady, "have I abandoned all for him, and is this my recompense?"

The Constable, without heeding her reply, turned to a squire:

"Raimbault," said he, "give me the sword that I wore at Marignan."

"He will not even listen to me!" continued Susan, bursting into tears. "The grief of a mistress is too insignificant to attract the notice of him who is preparing to spread wo and despair among thousands of wives and mothers! Farewell, my lord, if I must go without even a parting word from you to cheer a heart that is breaking."

"May God protect you, madam!" said the duke, indifferently, and in a tone that showed his thoughts were of the battle, and not of her. He seized his helmet and gauntlets, and raising his hand toward heaven, exclaimed:

"Now, Francis, you shall account with me for that blow! Hand me my surcoat and lance," he added, "and command the trumpets to sound."

Susan threw herself before him.

"At least, my lord," cried she, "if you have no word or thought for one who has sacrificed all for you, read this note;" and she thrust a paper into his hand.

Bourbon cast his eyes hastily over it, and turning to the squire, said:

"Hold! I am warned here that Bonnivet has planned an ambuscade for me, and that

this surcoat has been designated as a mark for the assassins: take it away." Then turning to Susan, he continued: "This is a signal service, madam, that some one has rendered me: who, in the French camp, can have been interested in preserving my life?"

"Do you not recognize the writing, my lord?" said Susan, reproachfully; "the writing of the most noble, and generous, and injured of men!"

"Ha!" cried the duke, in confusion, "can it be Saint Romain? It is, by Heaven! and he has taken a noble revenge on me!"

At this moment the trumpets sounded, and de Bourbon rushed out, saying:

"It is the signal, Susan, and I cannot pause. Pray God for yourself and for me."

Susan dropped on her knees, and exclaiming, "Oh, my father! my father! is it thus that I again behold this cathedral, where, in infancy, yonder tomb sheltered me from a brutal soldiery, and where I was afterward found and rescued? Rescued, alas! from a happy death, that I might lead a life of sorrow and disgrace!"

When the first gleams of dawn lighted the windows of the cathedral, Susan was still kneeling on its cold pavement, her forehead resting against the angle of a marble tomb, surmounted by a magnificent statue of Matteo Visconti. The troops had all evacuated the place, and while the roar of the battle was heard in the distance, the venerable monks of the convent were marching in procession, censers in hand, throughout the various apartments of the buildings, to purify them from the contact of the impious warriors.

Susan wept bitterly as she knelt alone in the cathedral, the holy aspect of which seemed to reproach her for her sins. She essayed to pray, but her voice failed her; and at length she rose, to seek light and air without the edifice; for, in the gloom of the deep shadows, she saw all manner of horrible phantoms. She passed the arches of the nave, and had nearly gained the door, when she saw something at her side. She paused; and it, too, stood still. She extended her hand, and a hand as cold as marble grasped it. The figure led her gently back toward the choir of the cathedral, and as they passed a window, whence a stream of light poured in, and revealed to her who it was that she accompanied, she fell powerless to the pavement.

It was her husband who stood by her side; pale as death, and habited in mourning, on his withered lips was a smile of mingled scorn and pity.

"Oh, mercy! mercy!" exclaimed Susan; for she divined from his manner that he contemplated some fearful deed.

Saint Romain replied, in a melancholy tone, "I predicted, Susan, that you would one day wish for death. It is now a year since you were thus before me at Moulins, where, with tears in your eyes, and despair in your face, you asked for pardon, and I granted you life. What have you done with this year that I allowed you for repentance?"

"Oh!" cried Susan, overpowered with terror; "do not look at me thus!"

"How have you employed this year?" repeated Saint Romain. "Where are your vigils, your stripes, your hair-cloth vesture? These robes and jewels and perfumes, betray the courtesan, unpurified by repentance."

"Alas! alas!" ejaculated Susan, "have you indeed come to slay me?"

"What have you done during this year?" reiterated Saint Romain. "Answer me! Have you employed the days I gave you, in proclaiming everywhere my dishonor?"

"Oh, yet give me time!" cried Susan.

Saint Romain removed the cap that had partly concealed his features, and threw it on the pavement. "Look at me, madam," said he; "I am calm; my conscience is unstained; and I have prepared myself by partaking of the communion, for inflicting upon you a just punishment."

"Then, indeed, my last hour has come!" murmured Susan, in despair.

"Are you ready to meet it?" demanded her husband.

"Listen to me, ere you slay me!" said Susan. "I have ever esteemed you, but love was never mine to give you: I had it not: it was not within my control. We cannot avoid our destiny; and mine has, in my own despite, urged me on to ruin. But I see, you believe me not; and, indeed, you have a right to distrust my word! Take my life, then; but spare me the preparations that might precede the punishment."

"You mistake, madam," said Saint Romain. "Your life is safe; though it has cost me great effort to procure the commutation of the penalty you have deserved."

"Who?" inquired Susan in astonishment; "who but you can desire my death?"

"A woman," replied Saint Romain, "who, with unrelenting hatred, pursues your life and your father's."

"Ha!" cried Susan, "my father too? my poor father! Great Heaven! what has he done to incur her resentment?"

"I will tell you," answered a voice behind her, "when he lies dead at my feet."

At these words Susan turned around in horror, and as she did so, she found herself confronted by Cesara Visconti, whose irritated looks foreshadowed the implacable vengeance reserved for her. She was strangely attired. On her gray head she wore a golden crown, and she was followed by four Italian ruffians, who carried drawn swords in their hands. In front of her stood a monk with a lighted torch.

"Orscolo, and you, my brave Galeotto," said Cesara to two of her satellites, who bent forward respectfully as she spoke, "you know in what cell of the convent Captain Langenfeld is confined?"

The men bowed an affirmative to this question.

"Bring him hither, then," continued Cesara; "and hark ye; if he resist—you are armed! Go."

Then grasping Susan by the arm, and drawing her toward herself, she went on:

"You shall know why I thirst for your father's blood and yours. Look at me! Do you not recognize in me the poor gipsy woman, on whom you bestowed your charities in France? Do you not recognize her who persuaded you to go from Paris to Moulins; who bore your letter to the Constable, and who arranged for you that interview with him which your husband so rudely disturbed? Well: that gipsy is now a duchess, and her pretended misery was but a stratagem to ruin you: the pity you vouchsafed to me was a weapon that shall slay your father, and turn your days into the darkness of night. That gipsy once had two children, who, after her, were heirs to a crown. She cherished those children as your father cherishes you: but your father murdered those children—your father, and the other ruffians whom your lover, the Constable, let loose on this devoted land."

"Madam!" cried Susan, in the last degree of terror, "you mistake: this cannot be so!"

"Come forward, Timoteo," said the duchess to one of the two followers that remained; "come forward, and answer. You at that time served the Constable; did you behold the deed I have related?"

"I did, madam," said the man.

"Was not one of the helpless innocents," continued the duchess, "already pierced by two sword-thrusts, and the other slightly wounded in the wrist by a lance, when this Captain Langenfeld arrived to seize the scarce-wounded babe, and dash it out of the window?"

"It is true, madam," said the man.

"Do you now know why he shall die?" cried the duchess, turning fiercely upon Susan; "and wherefore you should die also? Did not the pleading of your husband procure for you a punishment far worse than death? No!" she added, with a hollow laugh, "you shall not die: but for ten years you shall languish in a dark dungeon of the convent, with bread and water for your sustenance, the cold stone for your bed, and horse-hair for your raiment. At the end of this time, you shall have a confessor, and when your hair is as white with wo as mine is, you shall have liberty, if you have strength to take it!"

Susan turned, and cast herself in despair at the feet of the statue of Matteo Visconti:

"I will die here," she cried; "here, under the eye of this hero, whose sepulchre was the mysterious cradle of my infancy! I appeal to the pity of the dead, since the ears of the living are closed alike against penitence and prayer!"

Cesara Visconti turned deadly pale, as Susan pronounced these words. She passed her hand over her brow, as if to recall some nearly extinguished recollections; and then again seizing Susan by the arm, she cried:

"This tomb! speak! do *you* know this tomb?"

"My father has told me," cried Susan, "that this sepulchre was my cradle and refuge, during the wars that took place here sixteen years ago."

The duchess held Susan firmly at the length of her arm, looked steadily in her eye, and said slowly:

"During the wars sixteen years ago! Louis the Twelfth reigned then in France, did he not? And your father—I mean Captain Langenfeld—commanded at that time, as he does this day, a company of the Constable's soldiers, did he not?"

"This is all true, madam," stammered Susan, more than ever astonished at this change in the language and manner of the duchess, and totally at a loss how to comprehend the bearing of these questions: "this is all true, madam; but how does it concern you?"

"How does it concern me!" echoed the duchess, now herself astonished to the last degree, "God in heaven! does it *not* concern me! Fly, Timotéo! Tell them to spare him! Tell them to bring hither Captain Langenfeld, without harming a hair of his head! Fly, slave! Do you hear me?"

The satellite vanished as rapidly as his

limbs could carry him; and the countess continued:

"My life, my hopes, everything now hangs upon a word from his lips!" and she strode to and fro the gallery, uttering disconnected words, in which prayers and curses were intermingled. Occasionally, she turned to cast a glance of pity toward Susan, who still knelt at the tomb as motionless and cold, and almost as insensible, as the statues that surrounded it. Saint Romain stood with his eyes fixed on the pavement, awaiting patiently the issue of a scene which had become too intricate for his comprehension.

In the meantime, a side-door of the cathedral was thrown open, and a procession of monks advanced slowly and silently to the altar, bearing wax-lights and smoking censers. After kissing the steps of the altar, the senior monk approached the duchess:

"We are prepared, sister," said he, "to execute your orders. A solitary cell, inaccessible to the day, awaits the penitent in the remotest part of the monastery. When the times are more peaceful, I will myself remove her to the convent of the Benedictines at Pavia."

"I thank you, reverend father," replied the duchess; "but I am just now in great perplexity, and we must wait till a mystery is solved. Pray, in the meantime, that Heaven may enlighten our poor judgment."

The monks withdrew to one side, and the duchess stood listening with intense eagerness. In a few moments, the sound of footsteps caught her ear, and rushing to the door, she looked out and exclaimed:

"Silence! I see him: he is coming. But hold!" she added, in a startled tone, "Timotéo has not reached them! Galeotto speaks to Langenfeld—they stop—Orseolo essays to drag him forward—he lifts his sword. Death and hell! Galeotto strikes him from behind! Timotéo is too late, and they have killed him! On! on! knaves!" she shouted, "bear him hither: he may live still!"

After a few minutes, the two ruffians entered, bearing the body of Captain Langenfeld, which they laid at the feet of the duchess. Susan threw herself frantically on the body, and endeavored, by her caresses, to restore it to consciousness.

"He breathes, madam," said Galeotto, putting his ear to Langenfeld's face.

And, indeed, the wounded man opened his eyes and moved his lips, with a faint effort to speak. The duchess hastily motioned the superior of the convent to approach, and present his crucifix to the dying man.

"He was born a Catholic," said she, "and perhaps the sign of our redemption ——"

"In the name of our holy faith, my son," said the monk, "I absolve you, if you answer truly to our questions."

De Langenfeld endeavored to raise himself, and looked on the crucifix.

"Is this your daughter?" said the duchess, pointing to Susan.

He shook his head, but could make no other answer.

"You carried her off from Italy when she was a child: where did you find her?" continued the duchess.

De Langenfeld, with one hand pressed the hand of Susan, and with the other pointed to the tomb already designated.

"So help me God!" cried the duchess, with great emotion, "I believe, Susan, that you are my own long-lost child! But," she added, turning to Langenfeld, "what proof have you that this is she?"

The captain pointed to a scar on Susan's wrist.

"That," cried Orseolo, "is the scar of the lance-wound that I gave the child as the captain was carrying her off: he did not kill her."

"Then all the saints to his succor!" exclaimed the duchess.

But it was too late. De Langenfeld uttered one groan, turned on his side, and expired.

"My child! my own child! my darling!" cried the duchess, seizing the fainting Susan in her arms; "no more hatred! no more vengeance! no more blood or tears!"

Saint Romain made no effort to detain the duchess, who now withdrew with Susan; nor did the expression of his countenance change at this discovery of her parentage. After standing in gloomy silence for a few minutes, he raised his eyes and saw the two men who had slain de Langenfeld, standing near him.

"You have no dread of a battle?" said he abruptly.

"War has been our trade for twenty years, my lord," said one: "sometimes we have fought for the king and sometimes for the emperor, according to the wages and the times."

"Here are a hundred ducats," said Saint Romain; "they are all I possess, and you shall divide them between yourselves, if you will mount horses, and follow me into the thickest of the fight."

"For such a price, my lord," answered Galeotto, weighing the purse in his hand, "we are altogether at your disposal."

"Come on, then," said Saint Romain, "strike boldly and truly, and—hark ye—spare none that I point out to you!"

THE HOUR OF VENGEANCE. ....PART II.

Before the dawn of this eventful day, Don Alfonso d'Avalos, by order of Pescara, had effected an entrance into the park of Mirebello, where the French rear-guard were encamped, under the command of the Duke d'Alençon.

Galiot de Genouillac, commander of the French artillery, and one of the heroes of Marignan, arrested, for a moment, the impetuosity of the assault; but the Spaniards outnumbered him, and not only threw a large body of men into the town to unite with the garrison in a sortie, but also cut off this rear division from the main body, and deprived them of all support from the king.

Meantime, Francis himself, misapprehending the effect of this movement, and conceiving, in spite of the assurances of his old captains, that the Imperialists here were retreating, instead of pursuing, fell upon Pescara's division, and exposed his own flank by the movement.

De Bourbon saw the error, and promptly availed himself of it; and, by dividing the troops under the command of Frundsberg and Sith, he fell on the flank and rear of the black bands, and, to use the expression of Varillas, crushed them as in a pair of pincers.

From this moment, the battle of Pavia was a mere rout. The French lines once broken, the Spanish arquebusiers had only, at their leisure, to single out and slay the most celebrated chiefs, even in the midst of the gendarmerie—at the head of whom Francis was fighting with the courage of despair; his armor covered with a surcoat of silver cloth, and his helmet garnished with plumes; so that he was the most conspicuous object in his army, and became the aim of every gun and spear: while the élite of the French noblesse fell around him like grain before the reapers.

"Heaven is against us, gentlemen," cried Francis, taking advantage of one of those intervals that will occur in the hottest battles, to look around him and to breathe more freely.

"Rather say, sire," replied de Foix, "that Bonnivet is against us! It is he who has brought this ruin upon us."

"My lord marshal," returned Francis, "you bear him enmity for the sake o your brother de Lautrec."

"Not so, sire," said de Foix; "but, r ther, for being the author of all our disa ters. Who but he excited de Bourbon rebel? Who but he, with his absu counsels, has marred every project in t Milanais? Do you not remember, sir that the ignorance and presumption of th your favorite, caused the death of t chevalier de Bayard, at the battle of Bi grasso? And do we not this day suff defeat, by reason of the confidence yo still repose in him?"

"It may be true," replied Francis, d spondingly; "but is there no way left retrieve the day?"

"None whatever, my lord," replied Chabannes, as he wiped away the blo that flowed over his white beard: "b sides, you are yourself wounded."

"It matters not!" cried Francis res lutely: "I have, at least, strength enou to die! De Chabannes, tell the Basta of Savoy to advance."

"He is dead, sire!" replied de Chaba nes.

"Is he dead?" cried the king, in asto ishment. "Then let de la Tremouille r place him."

"He, too, is dead, sire!" answered Foix; "his head and heart are pierced a score of bullets."

"Summon, then, the Duke of Suffolk said the king.

"He is dead, also, my liege!" said Chabannes; "and so are the Count Vandemont, de Amboise, Saint Severi Louis d'Ars, de Tournon, de Tonnere, Lorraine and de Nevers."

"Alas! alas! for the noblesse of France cried the king. "Where are the princ of my blood—Francis and Hector de Bou bon?"

"Dead, sire!"

"The king of Navarre?" added Franci

"A prisoner to the Spaniards, wi Montmorenci, Brion, and the flower your majesty's household," replied Foix; "and Bonnivet, the author of a this wo, Bonnivet alone survives."

"Do not condemn him wholly," sa Francis, beseechingly; "his courage ma

yet redeem his errors. Gentlemen," he continued, "I am sorely punished for my imprudence, and de Bourbon triumphs. Nevertheless, with this last remnant of my army, I will yet make head against fortune."

At this moment, a furious assault separated the speakers, and the battle was renewed with more fury than ever. The king suspected, from the impetuosity of the attack, that it was led on by de Bourbon in person; and he was not deceived.

The group that surrounded and defended the king's person, was soon broken through in six different points. De Chabannes fell with a score of wounds, and was trampled by the horses; and de Foix, having one arm and shoulder broken, and dying from other wounds, sought Bonnivet that he might himself slay him with his remaining arm. But the luckless favorite was, at this moment, evincing a bravery that partly atoned for his faults.

Separated from the main body of the army by the lasquenets of the Constable, he found himself almost alone, on the plain; yet, instead of seeking safety by flight, as d'Alençon had done, he rushed into the meleé, as if resolved not to survive the misfortunes of the day.

De Bourbon in vain endeavored to reach him, and take him alive; he found his corse lying on the edge of a ditch, by the side of another body, and two broken swords between them. Curious to know who it was that had anticipated him, in slaying a man he so detested; he raised the visor of the other warrior, and started on recognizing the features of Saint Romain! Whether this brave young man had determined to revenge himself on the counsellor who had led Francis to ruin; or, to serve for the last time, his former master, the Constable, by slaying his direst foe—de Bourbon was unable to determine. But as he presently gave signs of life, Pomperant ordered his men to take him into the town with the wounded Spaniards.

Shouts of victory now resounded from that part of the field where the king had fought, and the Constable hastened to learn the issue.

Francis was wounded in the arm and right hand, and by reason of the blood that flowed over his face, from the wound above the eye, he could scarcely be recognized. He was bruised, too, by the weight of his horse, that had partly fallen on him; yet he was defending himself desperately against a number of assailants. Two Spanish officers, ignorant of his rank, had, with their swords at his throat, summoned him to surrender, just as de Bourbon arrived. Pomperant threw himself between them, announced the king's name, and besought him to yield to the Constable. This, Francis desperately refused to do; but in order to arrest the massacre of his troops, he called for the viceroy of Naples.

De Lannoy respectfully approached the king, and held out his hand to assist him in rising; he then raised his helmet, bent one knee to the ground, and received the sword of the royal prisoner.

"I surrender it to you," cried Francis, "well bathed in the blood of your bravest men."

"Sire," replied de Lannoy, presenting his own sword in return, "I offer you this which has spared many of yours!"

THE END OF BOOK III.

BOOK FOURTH.

TREASON FOR TREASON.....PART I.

The inhabitants of Madrid were all at their balconies; for the emperor, Charles V., was returning hither from Toledo. The appearance of the imperial cortége, was magnificent in the extreme; while the ringing of bells, and the roaring of cannon, added much to the imposing effect of the occasion.

The men-at-arms of the old Burgundian legions came first, to prepare the way. They were followed by four-and-twenty pages, dressed in velvet, of the emperor's colors—yellow, gray and violet—on palfreys that curvetted with all imaginable grace. The grand equery, arrayed cap-a-pié in *armes blanches*, and bearing the royal sword, immediately preceded his majesty, who was mounted on a superb dark-bay genet. He wore a golden armor with a mantle of cloth of gold; and on his head, according to his custom, was a plain velvet cap, without plumes or garniture.

At his right hand, rode Charles de Lannoy, who had brought into Spain the royal captive of Pavia; and all eyes were fixed on this usurper of the glory of Bourbon and Pescara, who now enjoyed the triumph of the victory that he had not acheived.

This, indeed, the emperor well knew. His shrewdness could not be misled on the question, who it was that won the battle of Pavia. But it did not coincide with his policy to exalt two generals in whom he could not wholly confide, and who held their renown independent of his power. Therefore, though Lannoy was a soldier but in name, and depended solely on his imperial master for reputation, Charles gladly availed himself of the factitious circumstance that Francis, though conquered by the other chieftains, actually surrendered his sword to the viceroy of Naples—to give, on this occasion, the post of honor to one unworthy to enjoy it, because he was also unable to abuse his privilege.

Foremost in the emperor's suite, came Gaspar d'Avalos, grand-inquisitor of Spain, and the prelate Osma, his majesty's confessor. Next, were the lord high-constable of Castile; the Count de Haro, his son; the grand-admiral, Roderigo Henriquez; don Ferdinand de Toledo; the Duke of Alba; Don Mercurino, grand-chancellor of Spain; the Marquis de Villena; the Count de Beaurain; and a host of less renowned gentlemen, who, in default of other merit, prided themselves on the fame of their ancestors.

The populace rushed toward the palace gates, to witness the dismounting of this noble company. As the emperor alighted, a soldier bent on his knee before him, and presented a parcel containing letters, saying:

"May it please your majesty, from the Duke de Bourbon and the Marquis of Pescara, of the army of Italy."

The grand equery received the parcel, and handed it to the emperor, who ordered an officer to conduct the bearer of these dispatches to the palace.

The messenger was immediately ushered into the grand gallery of the palace, where all the nobility of the realm awaited the emperor, on his way to the council-chamber; and where, it may be added, all shunned the new-comer with a perfect unanimity. He had travelled in haste, as the importance of his mission required, and was covered with dust and sweat; his soiled garments forming a strange contrast with the mantles and embroideries of gold and jewels, that flashed around him on every side.

But the man was nothing daunted by this unequivocal reception. He threw himself carelessly into a splendid arm-chair, and with a disregard of etiquette, that was at least characteristic in a rough soldier, wearied by travel, incontinently fell asleep.

When he opened his eyes, the gallery was cleared of its former guests, and a vigorous hand and arm, applied to the shoulder-knots of his pourpoint, was shaking him with a violence that at once lifted him from his comfortable seat, and awoke him.

"Well, friend, what's your name?" said

the individual, who had thus unceremoniously aroused him.

"I am called Diego, sir," answered the soldier, brusquely, for he was not overpleased at the manner in which he had been disturbed; "and pray, sir, to whom have I the honor of speaking?"

"By my faith, Diego," answered the other, pleasantly, "you are a blunt man, and I doubt not, an honest one; so I will return your confidence. My name is Charles, and, like you, I am a soldier; there is, however, this difference between us: men generally add to my name, the titles of Emperor of Germany, and King of Spain and the Indies."

Diego was sadly disturbed at this announcement, and quite unable to reply at all to his emperor; but de Lannoy relieved him, by saying:

"I know the man, my lord. He belongs to Pescara's division, and fought bravely with the rest of us at Pavia."

"Never droop, man," said Charles, encouragingly, to Diego; "you travelled hard and were weary. I perceive by these letters," he continued, "that the Duke de Bourbon is near at hand, as he has already arrived on our frontier, and is hastening to the capital. He will be right welcome. Gentlemen," he added, addressing such of his suite as were in attendance, "I owe much to the Duke de Bourbon; let him be received among you in a manner befitting his rank and his bravery. You, my lord Villena, for the love you bear me, will place one of your palaces at the duke's disposal, during his sojourn in Madrid."

"I shall do so with all alacrity, since your majesty desires it," replied Villena, haughtily; "but I count on your permission to burn it to the ground, as soon as the traitor shall have quitted it."

Charles made no reply to this comment on the Constable, nor did he note the loud tone in which it was uttered;—in fact, he feigned not to have heard the words; for he was not ill-pleased at the reception de Bourbon was likely to meet with, though he could not, with any show of propriety, even appear to sanction such conduct on the part of his courtiers. Turning, therefore, to de Beaurain, he changed the subject, by saying:

"You have perused the letter of Pescara; let me hear what it contains?"

"I know not, sire, how to obey you," said de Beaurain, hesitating; "the letter is couched in such terms, that——"

"Ha!" interrupted Charles; "does the marquis complain of us?"

"No, sire," replied de Beaurain, "not of your majesty, but of his colleague, the viceroy of Naples."

"My lord de Lannoy," said Charles, not unwilling to distress the man on whom he had just conferred unmerited honor; "My lord de Lannoy occupies too high a place in our esteem, to be reached by any reproaches. The letter, de Beaurain: we will all laugh at it."

Thus directed, de Beaurain read as follows:

"If the counsels of the Count de Lannoy had been heeded, we had lost all Milanais by a shameful retreat on Naples. Nay, at the battle of Pavia, where the meanest soldier was a hero, this count knew neither how to command nor to fight; he evinced, as he possessed, neither bravery nor wisdom, neither courage nor ability: but, with a manifest terror, that rendered him despicable in the eyes of all, he continued to shout, 'We are lost! we are lost!' And if this said count dare to deny what I here asseverate, I will hold him responsible for a foul lie, at the point of my sword!——"

"Sire!" exclaimed de Lannoy, pale with rage and shame, "will you suffer me to sustain such insults in your presence?"

"Think not so deeply of it, my brave count!" replied Charles, with a coolness that might have betrayed to an indifferent spectator, his satisfaction at seeing the viceroy humiliated; "think not so deeply of it: but learn rather, to despise such calumnies. And, in the meantime, console yourself with the reflection that, by new proofs of courage and conduct, you will soon justify the preference I have shown you."

With these words, the emperor dismissed Diego, bestowing on him a royal recompense, and commanded him to say to the Duke de Bourbon, that the gates of the palace were open to receive him. He then, without further parley, proceeded to the council-chamber.

As he was about to cross its threshold, a young and beautiful female advanced toward him; and kissed his hand.

"Sire!" she exclaimed, looking anxiously into his face, "pardon this intrusion, but I must speak with you."

"Your time is ill-chosen, Eleonora," said Charles: "I am on my way to the council. Leave me now, to adjust what concerns my kingdom; what concerns you I will afterward consider."

"You must listen to me first, sire," replied the widow of the king of Portugal: then, fearing that, by her tone, she had wounded the emperor's peculiar sensibility, she added, in a more supplicating

tone: "Your majesty surely will not render my whole life miserable by giving my hand to a man whom I cannot esteem?"

A flash of joy gleamed over the emperor's face, which, brief as it was, did not escape his sister's notice. She saw that her repugnance coincided with his own projects; and, emboldened by her success thus far, she threw herself at the feet of the haughty sovereign, who immediately raised her up and embraced her. Thus encouraged, she proceeded more confidently, saying:

"You know, Charles, that I have ever been faithful and devoted to you, deferring always my wishes to your own: but now, when you thought fit to dispose of my hand in favor of the Duke de Bourbon, I have dared to hope that considerations of policy would not be suffered entirely to overbalance the desires of my foolish heart. It is rumored, that the duke will arrive here this day; and he comes to claim the fulfillment of your promise—which, however, cannot be fulfilled but at the expense of your sister's happiness. Forbid this marriage, my dear brother! Suffer it not to be consummated, I entreat you! for the widow of Emanuel the Great can never ally herself to a man, who has risen to fortune on the ruins of his country. Dispose of me otherwise as you will, but give me not to a prince whom I can never regard but with feelings of hatred and contempt."

"You hear her, my lords!" cried Charles to his counsellors: "you are witnesses of my efforts to fulfill my promise to the duke: and you see that an unforeseen obstacle has arisen to disappoint me. You shall be the arbiters between us."

As Charles said this, he imprinted a kiss on his sister's forehead, and entered the council-chamber.

The affair in relation to which the emperor had, on this occasion, thought fit to convene his ministers, was a matter that concerned him nearly; yet he consulted them, rather to obtain their approbation of the course he had already determined to pursue, than with any intention of being governed or even influenced by their advice, if it chanced to oppose his views. This affair was the ratification of a treaty that would restore to freedom the king of France, who now languished in the Alcazar of Madrid.

Hitherto, Francis had resolutely refused to sanction the dismemberment of his kingdom, by ceding Burgundy to the emperor; and he had, with equal firmness, rejected a proposition to reinstate the Constable in his titles and possessions.

On his part, Charles, hoping everything from time, had counted on wearing out the patience of his prisoner; but he just now learned that the king had fallen dangerously ill, and he feared, with good reason, that he might, by his captive's death, lose all the advantage he had gained by his victory. He therefore resolved to grant, if necessary, certain concessions, and for the first time to visit Francis in his prison, there to discuss the basis of a final treaty, one article of which should be the transfer of the hand of Eleonora from the Duke de Bourbon to the king of France.

The chancellor, Gattinara, violently opposed the emperor's project to obtain Burgundy from Francis by virtue of a treaty: "For," said he, "once give the king his liberty, and he will set his treaty at nought. Let your majesty first conquer this fine province, and treat with its sovereign afterward."

"In my judgment," said de Lannoy, "it would be more worthy of your highness to send him home without ransom. As for reinstating de Bourbon, and erecting his estates into a kingdom independent of the crown, the king, as we all know, would rather die in chains."

"My lord de Lannoy," cried the emperor, impatient of such counsel from such a source, "I am bound by my word to the Duke de Bourbon, and it behooves you to recollect that the word of an emperor is sacred!"

"Your imperial majesty does well to keep your word to the duke," said the prelate Osma, with that familiar tone that the private friendship of his sovereign and his office of royal confessor warranted; "since it is certain that the king of France will render your promise nugatory, by refusing to ratify it."

"I shall, nevertheless, have fulfilled my duty, my lord bishop," replied Charles.

"True, sire, and at small cost," rejoined the prelate.

"But what does Francis require further?" asked Charles. "I think, my lords, that we should do all things to satisfy him?"

"He desires, sire, the hand of your august sister, the queen of Portugal," replied the chancellor; "and he pledges himself to unite, at a future day, the dauphin with her daughter the infanta."

The further deliberations of the council were, by this remark, very naturally led to the most important part of Charles's policy He did not, however, openly resolve on breaking faith with the Constable, on th-

ground of a state necessity; though he carefully enumerated all the advantages that would result to Spain from the alliance proposed by the chancellor—which alliance, he made it appear, was now for the first time suggested to him. After feebly pleading with his counsellors in behalf of the Constable, and testifying his regret at the almost public avowal of repugnance to him which his sister had made, he seemed, with great regret, to accede to the advice that he himself had dictated beforehand.

"And what will the Duke de Bourbon say now?" insinuated the prelate, after these things had been determined on.

"Reasons of state, my lord bishop, and the happiness of our well-beloved sister," replied the emperor, "these are more powerful than our sovereign will. Nevertheless, by our sacred faith, we will indemnify the duke, for he has fought nobly in our behalf!"

"You will indemnify him, sire, for his services," whispered Osma in his ear, "as the king of France will indemnify him for Provençe and Dauphiny, which you allow that monarch to retain."

"God alone is master of the future," said Charles, solemnly. Then, soliciting by a look the assent of his counsellors, he added:

"On this basis, we will discuss the treaty of Madrid?"

"I still maintain, if it please your majesty," said Gattinara, "that this treaty will prove disastrous to us. The king of France neither has the power nor the disposition to fulfill his part of the contract."

"You will not the less affix the seal to this treaty, my lord chancellor," said Charles, decidedly.

"I will never seal it, sire!" cried the chancellor; "for I should thereby forswear myself, by acting counter to the true interest of my sovereign."

"Then," replied the emperor, in perfect good humor, and rather amused than irritated at the sturdy obstinacy of his counsellor, "I will seal it myself. My lords, the council is dissolved. In accordance to the earnest entreaties of the king of France, I shall to-day visit him in his prison. Let him be apprised of my intention."

As the counsellors were about to separate, the Duke of Alba presented a paper to the emperor, saying:

"Will your majesty be pleased to sign this order?"

"What is it?" said Charles; then casting his eyes over it, he added in surprise—"how! an order to arrest the sister of the French king?"

"Yes, sire," replied the duke, firmly; "her safe-conduct expires this night, and the Duchess d'Alençon is suspected of an attempt to favor the escape of the king."

The emperor subscribed the order, saying:

"Invite her to take up her abode in our court; we will endeavor to make the sojourn agreeable." Then, handing the paper to the viceroy of Naples, he added: "My lord de Lannoy, see to the execution of this matter."

A chamberlain announced the arrival of the Constable in Madrid; and also, that he was even now at the gates of the palace, demanding audience of the emperor.

This intelligence somewhat disconcerted Charles; for, however gravely and securely he might decide on the rights of the duke, in his private council-chamber, it was another thing to announce to him, face to face, the result of such farcical deliberations; and knowing, as he did, that he was liable to the duke's severe and well merited reproaches, for the line of conduct he had resolved to pursue, he could not, on the instant, master energy enough to confront him.

As he stood pondering this matter in silence, de Beaurain interposed, saying:

"What answer, sire, shall be carried to de Bourbon?"

"Let him wait," replied Charles, after a moment's hesitation; and, detaining Osma, while he motioned to the others to retire, he added, "I have need of your good services, my lord bishop."

"I am at your majesty's disposal," said Osma, as his colleagues withdrew.

"You must find for me, forthwith, a gentleman of repute," said the emperor, "who will perform a pilgrimage to Rome on foot, with staff and rosary, to win a pardon for one who finds himself forced to break his solemn oath."

"Is it the oath given to the Duke de Bourbon, to which your majesty alludes?" inquired Osma, with a smile.

"Do you ask?" said the emperor, significantly, and almost angrily—for this was a case where he chose to be understood, without much explanation.

"Am I not your majesty's confessor?" rejoined Osma.

"But we are not at the confessional now, my lord bishop," said the emperor.

The prelate's countenance assumed a more grave expression, as he proceeded to say:

"I know a French gentleman who was left for dead on the field of Pavia, and who was afterward brought to Madrid, by one

of our officers, for the purpose of being held to ransom."

"Do you think," said Charles, "that he would accomplish my mission faithfully?"

"I will answer for him to your majesty," said the prelate.

"Then I will stand chargeable for his ransom," replied Charles; "see that he is presented to me at the Alcazar, when I go thither to confer with the king of France."

De Beaurain now reëntered the council-chamber, and, at the same time, a chamberlain also entered from another door. The latter advanced, and whispered to the emperor:

"According to your majesty's orders, Dona Visconti and her daughter await you, sire, in your cabinet."

And de Beaurain, in turn, apprised the emperor that the Constable de Bourbon was still waiting his majesty's leisure.

"Let him wait!" said Charles, impatiently.

"Does your majesty," hazarded the prelate, "lend an ear to the complaints of that pretended heiress to the crown of Milan?"

"You will observe," said the emperor, "that it rests with me to render her doubtful claims, certain ones."

"Without doubt, sire," replied the prelate, "the investiture of the duchy of Milan, on condition of espousing the daughter of Dona Visconti, would be a plausible manner of redeeming your pledge to the Constable de Bourbon."

Charles cast an angry glance at the prelate; but instantly relenting somewhat, he said:

"Your advice is good, my lord bishop; but for the future, do me the favor to forget that I was once your pupil, and to remember that you are my tutor no longer. I beseech you to seek the man of whom we spake."

"Sire," replied the prelate, entirely disconcerted by this reprimand, "I will present him to your majesty at the Alcazar, as you have commanded me."

"De Beaurain," continued the emperor, as Osma withdrew, "receive the Duke de Bourbon here, and entertain him until I have leisure to see him."

The emperor retired to his cabinet, and de Beaurain, ordering the doors of the council-hall to be thrown open, the Constable entered immediately.

"Shall I at length be permitted to have audience of the emperor?" he said, with a great effort to restrain his vexation at the delay to which he had been subjected.

"His majesty is greatly oppressed with other affairs," replied de Beaurain, "and he begs that you will await him here."

"Wait! still wait!" exclaimed de Bourbon, crushing his gloves between his fingers; "did I cross the seas to attend your master, and must I now wait in his antechamber? Have I reconquered Milanais for him, and placed his rival a captive in his hands, to receive less courtesy than I ever received from the king of France, in his anger? My lord de Beaurain, you promised me a different reception."

"Such is the etiquette of our court, my lord," answered de Beaurain, deprecatingly.

"Since I set foot in Spain," continued de Bourbon, without heeding de Beaurain's remark, "what honors have been paid to the conqueror of Pavia? After the victory of Marignan, the king of France dismounted from his horse, embraced me, and called me brother."

"We are no longer in France, my lord," stammered de Beaurain.

"Truly, no! I perceive that you are right, sir! Even the crowd of youngsters which I passed through to reach this hall, contained scarce an individual who would make way for me! Saint-Barbe! but this is a courtesy I am all unused to! Sir," he continued sternly, "I come to demand audience of the emperor; to claim the fulfillment of his promise, and to receive in virtue thereof the hand of his sister, and my kingdoms of Provençe and Dauphiny. I have entered the palace, a suppliant, but it was in order to leave it, a sovereign!"

"The servitors of his majesty, my lord duke," replied de Beaurain, "are all equally dust and ashes, before the commands of our gracious sovereign."

"And shall I, then," cried the duke, "be constrained to regret what I have abandoned? No, by Heaven! the vessel that brought me to Spain is still at anchor, and my army of Italy, with arms in their hands, still await my orders on the plains of Milan."

A chamberlain entered at this moment, and placed a parcel in de Beaurain's hand, saying: "From the emperor, my lord;" and withdrew.

"His majesty advertises me," said de Beaurain, after glancing his eye over the missive, "that he can receive no one else to-day. But, perhaps," he added, as he saw the Constable's increasing irritation at this announcement, "perhaps there is some order concerning you, my lord, in the other papers."

"Let me know, then, at once," said de Bourbon, promptly, running his eye over the superscriptions of certain letters that

de Beaurain held before him: "Imperial order, conferring the Collar of the Golden Fleece on the nephew of the Marquis de Pescara."—"Imperial order, investing Charles de Lannoy, viceroy of Naples, with the principality of Sulmona."

"And what for Charles de Bourbon?" shouted the Constable in a rage.

"A letter from his majesty," replied de Beaurain, handing him one that he had just discovered.

The duke read it carefully, and then crushed it in his hand:

"An order," said he, "to meet him at the Alcazar, where he will confer with me touching certain promises that he has made. I understand this! He purposes to deceive me! See, de Beaurain, the superscription of the letter: 'To the Duke de Bourbon:' formerly he addressed me, as his well-beloved cousin and brother!"

"What course will you pursue, my lord?" asked de Beaurain.

"I shall learn from the lips of Charles, in the prison of Francis," answered de Bourbon, "that he is but a fool who confides in the promises of a monarch!"

TREASON FOR TREASON.....PART II.

While the events recorded at the close of the last chapter were occurring, two women, enveloped in cloaks, had gained the portal of the Alcazar of Madrid.

They passed in silence under the dark archways of the Moorish palace, that was now converted into the prison of Francis I. Alarson, a captain of the Spanish infantry, who had charge of the captive king, opened the gates for these two females, (whose blazoned litter, and rich garments of the deepest mourning, denoted their rank,) and introduced them into a lofty hall, from the sculptured stone columns of which, depended the Castilian banners, and the Saracen trophies.

When they were left alone, one of the females said to the other:

"He will soon be here, daughter. Remember, now, that you have sworn on the consecrated host to obey the emperor's commands. Remember, too, that you are no longer Susan de Langenfeld, but Catherine Visconti, heiress to the crown of Milan."

"But still, mother," replied the person thus addressed, "I tremble with fear."

"Remember, further, my child," continued the first speaker, "that the death on the battle-field of the Sieur de Saint Romain, has restored you to freedom, and that the dukedom of your father is accorded to de Bourbon, on condition that he holds it in virtue of your rights."

"If Heaven should so will it," murmured Susan devoutly, "all my woes would be forgotten!"

The elder lady started from the chair in which she had been seated, exclaiming:

"Think you that this adventurer, who has now no home but his tent, no country but his camp, and no family but a band of brigands, whom he calls soldiers, would refuse my alliance? Indeed," continued she, pacing the hall to and fro, with a proud and haughty step, "it is rendering him but too much honor, to cover with the mantle of my rank, the contempt which his treason inspires!"

"Do not denounce him, mother!" cried Susan, imploringly; "for your imprecations are heard in Heaven!"

"Is it possible that you love him still!" cried Cesara Visconti; "the author of all your misery? A man whose heart has never palpitated, but at the clash of swords and the sound of trumpets! Above all, a man who never loved you, Catherine!"

The young woman hid her face in the folds of her mantle, saying:

"Oh, say not so, mother! Were he again to repel me, I would love him still! And after all, of what have I to complain? He was overpowered with the weight of his own cares; his glory and his life, were both about to be risked on a bloody field—how had he leisure to caress me, or wipe away my foolish tears? But now, these cares are past. He is to receive from the emperor the recompense of his valor; and when his brow is lightened, and his disquietude put at rest, he will doubtless turn more gently toward me."

"Silly girl!" exclaimed Cesara, though at the same time regarding her daughter with a look of tenderness and pity, "know you not that the soul of an ambitious man is an arid soil, that the sunlight of affection can never render fruitful? Suppose he should refuse the emperor's proposals?"

"Then," cried Susan, throwing herself into her mother's arms, "I should be wretched indeed!"

"Be calm, my child," said Cesara; "he knows not yet what awaits him here, for he knows not that we are in Madrid; neither does he know that the vengeance of Cesara Visconti is a sleeping lion, which

it behooves him not to arouse. And now, Catherine, remember your oath: whatever may be his blandishments, his entreaties, or his threats, you must be firm!"

"Hark!" said Susan, stepping toward the door, which was partly open, and looking out: "some one is coming!—it is de Bourbon! Alas! my courage fails me. Would that the emperor might be prevailed on to renounce——"

"Silence!" cried Cesara, laying her hand on Susan's mouth: "he must not know we are here, until the emperor summons us to meet him."

The footsteps that now resounded through the gallery, were in truth those of de Bourbon, who had arrived at the Alcazar in obedience to the emperor's request. He already greatly distrusted Charles's faith, but he was yet far from suspecting the extent of his majesty's perfidy; and he not only deemed it impossible for the emperor wholly to forget his past services, but equally impossible for him to be so rash and impolitic, as either to deprive himself of the Constable's good offices hereafter, or to expose himself to a revenge of which the French king had lately had such terrible experience. He considered Charles too accurate a judge of men and character, not to know that Lannoy was in every way unworthy of the honors he had heaped on him—although that individual had, by a dexterous artifice, brought Francis a prisoner to Madrid without the knowledge of his colleagues.

While the Constable was pacing with hasty steps along the immense corridors of the Alcazar, impatiently waiting his interview with the emperor, a soldier who had attended him hither from the palace, hastened to him with a paper, which he said one of his comrades had picked up, but which neither he nor his comrades were able to read. It proved to be a paper dropped accidently by one of the French king's suite.

The duke took the paper, and on glancing his eye over its superscription, perceived that it was a letter addressed to Francis in the hand-writing of Margaret de Valois, Duchess d'Alençon. He opened it without hesitation, and was soon lost in astonishment at what he read.

"Diego," said he to the soldier, "has no one seen this paper but yourself and your comrade who found it?"

"No one, my lord," said the soldier.

"Very well," replied the Constable indifferently, thrusting the letter into his glove; "it is a thing of no consequence; yet, say nothing to any one concerning it." Then he added in a different tone, and as if a thought had suddenly occurred to him, "I wish to see the governor of the Alcazar: seek him at once, and present me to him."

The soldier made no reply, but led the way to the apartments of Alarson, who had formerly served under de Bourbon in the Milanais. The duke followed, and as soon as he met the governor, he begged him to grant him an interview, even but for a moment, with the French king.

Alarson acceded to the request, though not without hesitation; for Francis had already made several nearly successful attempts to escape, and Alarson had been given to understand that he would be held to answer with his head for his prisoner's safety.

It was not without a lively yet indefinable emotion, that de Bourbon entered that part of the Alcazar where his lawful sovereign, through his agency, was enduring a cruel captivity. A few chambers with low ceilings, dark and damp—a few worm-eaten seats—some shreds of tapestry, representing with equal exaggeration and bad taste the mighty deeds of Spanish arms—these were all that was vouchsafed to the royal prisoner, in exchange of the sumptuous magnificence of the hotel des Tournelles. His court, too, was as much reduced as his fortunes; for scarce a handful of his courtiers had survived the battle of Pavia.

De Bourbon, as he approached, recognized de Brion, Pontchenu, and Montmorency, the three friends of Bonnivet, attending upon their sovereign. These carpet-knights, more fortunate or more prudent than their associates, had been made prisoners with Francis; as had, also, certain braver and worthier men, viz. Flemanges, surnamed the Young Adventurer, William de Bellay-Langey, La Roche-du-Main, and others.

When the Constable entered the apartment, an expression of disapprobation escaped from the prisoners, and the king arose from his seat in great surprise. Slowly, and with entire self-possession, de Bourbon made his way through the group that seemed disposed to resist his approach, and bent to kiss the hand of the king; who, on his part, permitted him to do so, and motioned to his courtiers to retire.

The king received de Bourbon as a prince of his blood, and as if he had forgotten that he was the author of his misfortunes; and, in return, the duke deplored the king's unhappy situation, and hastened to express a hope that his time of trial was about to end. He, moreover, proffered his

influence with the emperor to bring their mutual negotiations to an end.

This moderation of language between two men who had so grievously wronged each other, proved that at length each understood the enormity of his offence, and that, at that moment, each was willing to repair the wrongs he had inflicted. But it was now too late to undo what had been done; and both were destined to drain to the very dregs the cup of misery that each had offered to the other.

At last, the Constable explained the immediate object of his visit.

"You are aware, sire," said he, "that while the emperor is treating with you for your liberty, no wish is nearer his heart than to retain you in bondage?"

"I know it well," replied Francis, dropping his head, that was weary with sickness and sorrow, upon his breast.

"Have a care, then," continued the Constable, "not to furnish him with a pretext for doing so, by confiding to hair-brained scapegraces such dangerous projects as should be known only to yourself and your God."

Francis was thunderstruck at this remark; but the Constable, quietly giving him the letter that he had received from Diego, went on:

"If this paper," said he, "had fallen into the hand of your enemies instead of my own, the Duchess d'Alençon, in place of escaping into France to perform the honorable and holy mission you have intrusted to her, would now be sharing your captivity!"

"My lord duke," cried Francis, grasping the Constable's hand, "you have been the protecting angel of both my sister and myself; and you prove to me, by this act, that France, and her glory, is still dear to you. I thank you, cousin, with all sincerity: and, on the honor of a gentleman, my heart bleeds to think that we have for ever lost the hope of seeing you again at our court. If, by any means——"

"Let us not speak of these things, sire," interrupted the Constable. "What is done, is done. Had I placed my foot in hell, I would not withdraw it. You know my humor!"

Francis paused a moment, ere he replied:

"You are as well aware as I can be of the emperor's duplicity, and I trust in God you will never have reason to complain of it! At the same time, it is my duty to forewarn you, that I can never accede to the stipulations in your favor contained in the treaty that Charles has submitted for my inspection."

"Nevertheless," replied de Bourbon, "I have no disposition to retract them."

"The emperor, my brave cousin, will judge of the fitness of my reasons for refusing," said Francis.

"I have his promise," said de Bourbon.

"And a valueless thing you will find it," retorted Francis. "For example, and not to specify further, I have this day received from the emperor the offer of his sister's hand, which it is said he once offered to you."

"Then my suspicions were just!" exclaimed the Constable, "and the emperor has given me this interview solely to advertise me of his breach of faith. Saint Barbe! perchance his policy suggests the expediency of proposing to me some other union: he regards me, perhaps, no longer as his ally, but his vassal! But he mistakes me. By Heaven! sooner than bend my will to his caprice——"

"Cousin! cousin!" interrupted Francis, "will you ever be thus obstinate and impetuous? Your heart is great and generous, but your head will be your ruin! Pause, I conjure you, before you compromise your safety by any rash adventure. Remember that, whatever you do, the emperor now holds your destiny in his own control."

"It matters not, sire!" returned de Bourbon. "I will forthwith to the emperor, and know his purpose. Afterward, let come what may!"

De Bourbon, with these words, hastened from the king's apartment; and, under the guidance of Diego, sought the hall where he was to wait the emperor's arrival.

As he reached this hall, he heard two female voices inquiring, in an adjoining apartment, whether the emperor would soon be there. He started at the tones, with which he was familiar, and abruptly pushing open the door that separated him from the speakers, he found himself face to face with Madam de Saint Romain and her mother.

"What!" he exclaimed, in astonishment, "are you here, Susan!"

"We, like yourself, my lord," replied Cesara, "have repaired hither in conformity to the emperor's commands. This lady whom you behold is no longer Susan de Langenfeld, but Catherine Visconti, my daughter, rightful owner of the crown of Milan, by virtue of the cession of my right in the same, which right is recognized by the emperor himself."

"I understand it all, then!" cried the Constable. "Susan de Langenfeld, or Catherine Visconti, whichever name it

pleases you to assume," he added reproachfully, "can it be that you, too, are leagued with my enemies?"

"Leagued with your enemies!" echoed Susan; "No, my lord! never!"

"Is it not at least true," pursued de Bourbon, "that the emperor employs you to induce me to surrender my claims to his sister's hand?"

"His sister's hand!" ejaculated Susan in astonishment, and apparently unable to commence her replies, except by repeating the words that induced them; "his sister's hand, my lord! I knew nothing of this. I knew not——" and her tongue faltered as she proceeded; "I knew not that you proposed a marriage——"

"Do not suppose," interrupted de Bourbon, reckless alike of her position and her distress, "that I will receive from you, madam, the investiture of the duchy of Milan, though the emperor's entreaties second your proposal. His policy would soon wrest the crown from me as he now wrests it from Sforza, who also has his pledge of recognition."

"Mother!" cried Susan, in despair, and sinking back into a chair as she spoke, "you warned me but too truly of his falsehood!"

"Sir," said Cesara, taking the word in behalf of her daughter, and forcing herself to speak calmly, "you forget that the entreaties of the emperor are as binding upon his subjects as his commands."

"I am no subject of the emperor, madam!" replied de Bourbon haughtily.

"Ha!" cried Cesara, her eyes flashing fire, and her tone corresponding to her look, "whose subject are you, then? Has not France disowned you?—these walls, that reëcho with the groans of her king, will answer. They will tell you, further, that the traitor is accursed and detested in every land under heaven; that for him there is neither country nor home on the face of the earth; and that God absolves men from the oaths they have made to him!"

"Hold, madam!" cried de Bourbon, almost frantic with rage.

Susan threw herself between them, saying:

"My lord! tell me: what would you have me do?"

"Tell the emperor, that you refuse to espouse me!" said de Bourbon, coldly.

"If, Catherine," cried Cesara, fiercely, "you are base enough to do this——"

"Will you promise to do this?" interrupted de Bourbon, in a stern voice: "decide, on the instant!"

"I answer for her, my lord!" said Cesara: "no! she will make no such promise!"

"Then," said de Bourbon, "she shall not speak with the emperor at all. Diego! Lopez! come hither, knaves!" he exclaimed, addressing himself to the soldiers who had attended him. Then, turning again to Cesara, he added, "She shall be carried from this place by force, if need be."

He made a step toward Susan, to carry this threat into execution, when a door opened at the opposite extremity of the apartment, and Charles himself entered.

"God be praised, my lord duke!" he exclaimed, "that you have been beforehand with me in bringing about this interview. On my honor, I am overjoyed to find that your desires are thus in accordance with my own dearest wishes!"

"Sire!" said the duke, in the last degree of confusion, I——"

But the emperor went on:

"After I have signed the treaty of Madrid, which I am now about to complete with my brother Francis—to whom I have just given the hand of my well-beloved sister in marriage—the grand chancellor will present to me your marriage contract, and give you in exchange the deed of investiture of the duchy of Milan. Nay, do not thank me! Your faithful services well merit this reward. And if reasons of state have rendered impossible the alliance I first promised you, you will do me the justice to admit that I have repaired my error in a manner worthy of your desert, and my own honor!"

The duke exerted every energy of his soul to restrain the indignation that nearly overpowered him:

"Sire," he said, "when I quitted my country, I made to your majesty a solemn pledge, and received your pledge in return. The walls of this prison attest with what fidelity my pledge has been redeemed; and I beg your majesty to say whether or not, I am entitled to the fulfillment of your own. If I am so entitled, I await your answer in such silence as a due respect commands."

The emperor looked sternly at the duke, saying:

"Your silence, my lord, is somewhat boisterous; and your respect smacks strongly of audacity."

"If I have merited your majesty's disfavor," replied the Constable, not at all disconcerted, "you will, at least, deign to inform me wherein I have erred."

"If, sir," replied Charles, "you reckon the gift of the dukedom of Milan a disfavor

—that dukedom, for the possession of which, France and Spain have waged war for a century and a half—you are, at the least, very difficult to please!"

"Your majesty," returned de Bourbon, steadily, "will surely inform me, why I should surrender the hand of your sister?"

"Hark ye, my lord duke!" said Charles, stamping the floor, "you put the spurs too close!"

"I crave your majesty's pardon," persisted the Constable; "but this alliance with your sister——"

"Was proposed," interrupted Charles, "to flatter your pride. But the welfare of my kingdom requires that I should dispose of her otherwise."

"To Francis the First, you would say," added de Bourbon.

"And pray, sir," demanded Charles, "is not the king of France as worthy a gentleman as you or I?"

"I deny it not, sire," replied the duke; "but my claims are superior to his, nevertheless. I have services to plead, and your own royal promise to back my suit. I beseech your majesty to pardon my bluntness; but I am unused to harbor within my breast, the sentiments engendered by unworthy affront—come it from what source it may!"

"And I, sir," cried Charles, greatly excited, "am unused to see my favors rejected with disdain! You shall marry the daughter of Dona Visconti, my lord, and you shall become the duke of Milan, or by my imperial crown, I swear——"

This dangerous altercation was here interrupted by the entrance of a chamberlain, who came to apprise the emperor that the king of France was ready to appear before him, and discuss the claims proposed in the treaty.

At this juncture, also, the prelate Osma presented himself, and requested permission to introduce the young man of whom he had spoken to his majesty.

"You have my instructions on that point, my lord bishop," said the emperor; "it is for you to direct him as to the details."

"Surely, sire," persisted Osma, "you will not refuse this self-sacrificing young man, the single favor of being presented to your majesty, before he sets forth on his mission?"

Charles gave a sign of assent, and immediately the young man entered; but his appearance caused both Dona Visconti and her daughter, to utter a cry of surprise; and Susan fell fainting in her mother's arms.

"What is the meaning of this?" said Charles, impatiently.

"Before leaving this country, never again to behold it," said the new comer, without waiting for any one else to reply to the emperor's question, "suffer me, sire, to inform you who I am. My name is Ponthus de Saint Romain; I am the husband of Susan de Langenfeld, here present, who is now recognized by her mother as heiress at once to the name and crown of the Viscontis of Milan. Man cannot loose what Heaven has bound; and although your majesty is powerful, Heaven is more powerful!"

"That, I cannot gainsay," said the emperor; "and you have now appeared before me, as I take it, to announce your refusal to discharge the duty you have undertaken."

"Not so, sire," replied Saint Romain; "on the contrary, I am ready to depart on the instant; and I came solely to thank your majesty for vouchsafing to give the ransom, for lack of which, I was held in bondage."

"Make a holy use of your liberty, then, sir," replied the emperor; "and may your piety and resignation sustain you in all the trials of your future life!"

"I have great need of both those graces, sire," said Saint Romain, bending to kiss the hand that the emperor extended to him.

Saint Romain then approached his wife, who had partially recovered herself, and he continued:

"You will never see me more, Susan; therefore, fear me not. The walls of a monastery will hereafter be the refuge of him who was your husband. I shall always be to you, as one dead; so, forget that I ever lived, and give back to me our nuptial ring."

Susan was speechless from contending emotions; but she convulsively removed the ring from her finger, and let it fall into his hand.

Saint Romain broke it in twain:

"Thus," said he, in a clear, calm voice, "is all feeling of both love and hatred extinguished in my heart for ever!" And he left the apartment without another look at his unhappy wife, who had fallen to the floor at his last words.

The emperor, almost unmanned at this scene, exclaimed, after a brief pause:

"It seems to me, that my good angel has departed!"

A dead silence followed these words, which no one dared to interrupt: but, at length, the Duke of Alba entered the hall, saying, in a tone of alarm and vexation:

"Sire, the Duchess d'Alençon has been vainly sought for throughout the town!"

"Can she have escaped my vigilance?" cried Charles, recovering suddenly from his stupor.

"We have not yet entirely despaired of finding her," replied the duke. "The gates of Madrid have been closed since morning, and no one has been allowed to pass unquestioned."

"Let the king of France attend me here, then," said Charles; "and let the Duchess d'Alençon be brought hither as soon as she is discovered."

The Duke of Alba withdrew, and Charles, turning to the Constable, said:

"The king is about to sign the treaty of Madrid; and, notwithstanding what has passed between us, I swear to you that it shall not be my fault, if Dauphiny and Provençe be not ceded to you. Be not far off, and I will call for you when we approach the articles that touch your interest."

De Bourbon retired to an adjoining room, and Madam Saint Romain and her mother also withdrew by an opposite door.

"My sufferings have not terminated, mother," said Susan, as they retired.

"Neither have my curses!" replied Cesara Visconti.

The probable escape of the Duchess d'Alençon greatly disturbed the emperor. The beautiful Margaret, sister of Francis, and widow of the Duke d'Alençon—who, after basely fleeing from the battle of Pavia, had nevertheless perished in his retreat—hastened to Spain the instant that she received the intelligence of her brother's captivity. Here she bestowed on the suffering king, all the attention of which her strong affection was capable; and her touching solicitude, her courage, and her profound understanding, had contributed not a little to relieve Francis from his mental and bodily maladies.

While the emperor was pondering on the possible object and consequences of this lady's escape, the Count de Beaurain announced to him the king of France.

"May God have you in his holy keeping, sire!" said Charles, as Francis entered.

"Your majesty," replied Francis, "has graciously come to see your prisoner expire?"

"Do not call yourself my prisoner," said Charles, "but my good brother, and my friend, rather. Heaven is my witness that I have no other wish, than to restore you to freedom, and render to you all the satisfaction for the past that you can desire."

"Believe me," said Francis; "my gratitude shall never be behind your generosity."

"As a proof, then, of our mutual sincerity," replied the emperor, pressing Francis in his arms, "let us embrace each other, and let all discord between us be henceforth at an end. Could you believe that I would suffer you to die in a prison?"

"No, sire, for I have a ransom to pay you," said Francis quietly.

"Do you not remember," continued the emperor, without seeming to observe the bitterness of the king's answer, "that after the fatal battle which placed you in my power, I expressly forbade all public testimonials of rejoicing, all fire-works, and the ringing of bells?"

"I remember hearing," said Francis, "that your majesty refused to insult your brethren when in misfortune, by invidious demonstrations of triumph, and averred that such rejoicings became only a success obtained over the enemies of religion. I remember this well. It was on the day that I was immured in the prison of Pizzighettone, whence I was dragged to the Alcazar of Madrid."

"Let us forget this, my brother," said the emperor, "and form an indissoluble chain of friendship, the first link of which shall be your restoration to freedom."

"I am well agreed," returned Francis, "provided the chain you speak of, resemble not, too closely, the one you have already bestowed on me in Madrid."

"Nay, nay, my brother," replied Charles, "I aver that you shall be content. King David, who set at liberty his enemy Saul; Alexander's treatment of Porus; Pompey's to Tigranes—these evinced not more clemency than I desire to extend toward you. I have not forgotten that Louis XII. of France, was my tutor, and that you and I, through my grandmother, Mary of Burgundy, are cousins in the fourth degree."

"And pray, my most loving cousin," said Francis, "why have you not remembered this sooner? If, during the term of my imprisonment, you had visited this cousin and brother, you would have seen him parched with fever, and prostrate with grief on the floor of his dungeon. You would have seen the king of France, pale and apparently dying, surrounded by a few disheartened friends, and receiving from the hands of a priest the consecrated wafer, holily partaken with him by his excellent sister. This is the clemency of Charles, the august emperor of Spain and

the Indies! This is the hospitality of his Catholic Majesty toward a Christian king!"

"Let us speak of the future, my brother," replied Charles: "the past is no longer ours. I desire, that hereafter we should vie with each other in worthy sentiments and sincere friendship. I abandon to you the league of Italy, the pope, Florence, Lucca, Sienna, the Duke of Ferrara and the Venetians."

An almost imperceptible smile played, for an instant, on the lips of the king of France:

"You abandon these the more readily, sire," said he, "seeing that the pope and Florence have already separated themselves from you; that Lucca and Sienna have refused to continue their contributions, and that Ferrara and the Venetians have entered into a treaty with the regent of France, my well-beloved mother."

"Do not place too much confidence in the promises of these double-dealers," replied Charles.

"Do not be solicitous touching my credulity," retorted Francis: "misfortune has taught me sundry lessons of wisdom."

"To obtain your alliance," continued Charles, "I will break with your enemy, the king of England."

"Henry the Eighth, sire," replied Francis, "is now more your foe than mine. To-morrow, if I desire it, he will take arms against you in my behalf."

"My brother!" cried Charles, "let us judge of each other by acts, not words. Bear me witness, that I desire nothing more earnestly than to restore you to your kingdom. Oh! that day will be a glorious one for Paris! Your mother and children embracing you, and your nobility and your people shouting for joy: the oriflamme unfurled, windows dressed, drums beating, and these words resounding above all the tumult—'The king is free!'"

"Ah!" exclaimed Francis, with enthusiasm, the day of my liberation would indeed be a blessed day!"

"And to bring about that day," replied Charles, extending toward Francis a roll of parchment and a pen, "you have only to place your signature here."

But Francis continued, without noting the emperor's words:

"Alas! alas! I shall never behold that day!"

"On the honor of a man," cried Charles, "you shall behold it, if you will but be just."

"Erase from that treaty," said Francis, recovering himself, "the odious condition that requires me to create into a kingdom, for the justification of a traitor, the two finest provinces I possess."

"I have promised these, brother, to my lord de Bourbon," said Charles.

"I shall give no such promise," replied Francis, resolutely. "All I will do is to restore his own domains, and allow him to discuss before our parliament his alleged rights in Provence."

"Nevertheless," interposed Charles, "this new crown——"

"I will not concede it," said Francis; I will sooner die!"

"Then," said Charles, convinced that Francis would not yield, and that it was idle to press the matter further, "we will erase this condition, since you insist on it. But you will, of course, accept all the other provisions: you will cede Burgundy to me? What is a petty province, compared to the freedom I offer you!"

Francis rose hastily from the chair he had occupied, and exclaimed angrily:

"Think you I will again build up that house of Burgundy, which has cost France so much blood and treasure?—that I will introduce into the very heart of my realm a foe, always on the alert, to sow dissension among my people! No, sire, reckon not on that!"

"This time, sire," returned the emperor, peremptorily, "my demand admits no refusal."

"Because this time," said Francis, "you demand the promotion of your own ambitious purposes."

"If you persist in this," said Charles, "you shall never leave your dungeon alive!"

"I do persist, notwithstanding!" said Francis.

"Nay, sir!" continued the emperor, in a tone of intimidation, which he now saw it was necessary to assume: "you not only seal your own doom by this obstinacy, but your friends, your sister——"

"My sister," interrupted Francis, triumphing in his turn—"my sister is at this moment beyond your reach!"

"Is it then so?" said Charles to himself.

"The Duchess d'Alençon, an' it please your majesty," pursued Francis, in a taunting tone, "is far from Madrid, and I have even now received intelligence of her safety."

Charles stamped the floor with rage and disappointment:

"Then, by the Lord of Heaven," he exclaimed, "France shall never again behold her king!"

"Do not thus flatter yourself," said Francis, with a coolness and confidence that at once exasperated and alarmed the emperor; "my sister bears with her an act—the last I shall ever sign—by which I abdicate the crown of France, in favor of my son, the dauphin. Make ready, therefore, your dungeon, my cousin and dear brother! Francis de Valois is ready to die in Madrid, for the king of France is in Paris!"

The act of heroism which these words announced, and which, beyond comparison, was the worthiest and grandest act in the life of Francis I., extorted a shout of admiration from the group of French and Spanish gentlemen who witnessed this interview.

The emperor turned abruptly and severely toward his courtiers, checking immediately their ill-governed enthusiasm; and while he was deliberating as to the best method of disembarrassing himself with honor from his delicate position, the Constable approached.

"Sire," said he, "I have come to claim the fulfillment of your majesty's promise touching the estates of Provençe and Dauphiny."

"My lord duke," interrupted Francis, "I warn you that you will obtain nothing from me in that quarter. I prefer, rather, to die in captivity."

"So I have judged, sire!" returned the Constable.

The confusion of the emperor was now at its height:

"I have done my utmost, my lord duke ——" said he.

"I am under great obligations to your majesty, for your efforts in my behalf," replied de Bourbon: "I was a witness to your interview."

"You learned, then, my lord duke," said Francis, "how treason recompenses treason!"

THE END OF BOOK IV.

BOOK FIFTH.

THE EXPIATION.....PART I.

On the fifth day of May, in the year 1527, the army of the Constable de Bourbon, pitched its tents on one of the hills that overlook the city of Rome.

Pope Clement VII. had vainly hoped to arrest the danger that menaced his capital, by displaying to the invaders the treaty of peace that he had just concluded with the viceroy of Naples, who acted under the direction, and by the authority of the emperor.

After having ravaged Tuscany and Romagna, the Duke de Bourbon was resolved to crown his work of destruction by sacking the Holy City. His army consisted of five thousand gen'd'armes, a large body of Italian light-horse, twelve thousand German foot-soldiers, and a host of volunteers collected on the march, who counted on pillage in the place of stipulated wages.

The army was in a wretched condition; being destitute of ammunition, food and money; the wildest insubordination reigned in the ranks, and all the inferior officers lost their authority. Indeed, Bourbon himself, whose courage and genius, far more than his titles of general and prince of the blood-royal, caused him to be respected and obeyed—was exposed to the raillery of the soldiers, who had ironically styled him, *The Beggar*.

On the other hand, the pope, finding himself reduced to the necessity of physically defending his authority against an aggression, at that time unparalleled in the annals of history, hastened to intrench himself in the palace of the Vatican, and levied from the taverns of the city, and the stables of the cardinals, some four or five thousand worthless creatures, whom he armed with arquebusses, and whom he placed under the command of a man, named Renzo da Ceri—a person in all respects fit for such an office.

Besides these, six companies of the city were improvised into satellites of Saint Peter's throne, to whom were afterward added, two thousand mercenaries.

The leaders of the papal troops, solemnly bound themselves to compel the Duke de Bourbon to raise the siege; for, in their judgment, he would not be able to maintain himself in his present position for eight-and-forty hours; and during this time, the succors sent by the Italian league, under the Duke of Urbino, could not fail, as they alleged, to arrive.

The populace of Rome, however, were far from confiding in these boasts; for many strange and unaccountable occurrences had aroused their superstitions.

Even before de Bourbon had invaded the territories of the Church, a ragged beggar, named Brandano, wandered through the streets of Rome, announcing with lamentable cries, that the last time for repentance had arrived, and that the scourge of God was at hand. Each day, this singular being, squatting at the gates of the Vatican, charged the pope with the grossest offences, and shouted to him, as in a voice of inspiration, that he and his capital were slumbering on the edge of their sepulchre.

The Holy Eucharist, inclosed according to custom, in the sanctuary of the papal chapel, had been found one morning lying on the floor, without the sanctuary, and no one had been able to discover how, or by whom, the deed was perpetrated.

A thunder-bolt had struck off one of the arms of the Madonna, in the church of Santa-Maria—Transpontina, and the infant Saviour, as well as the crown of the virgin, was shivered into a thousand pieces.

But the higher classes of citizens, were so blinded to the reality of the approaching danger, that instead of providing for it, they seemed rather to provoke and defy it by their loose and scandalous conduct. And when the pope applied to the wealthiest of them for a loan of the sums necessary to pay his troops, they would not vouchsafe even to answer his request. Domenico de Massini alone, the most wealthy of all, ironically proposed to lend his holiness one hundred crowns. This wretched man,

afterward paid dearly for his avarice; for his palace was despoiled, his treasures were pillaged, his daughters were given up to de Bourbon's soldiers, and he was himself forced to pay his last mark in exchange for life and liberty. The night intervening between the fifth and sixth days of May, was the latest period of probation allowed by celestial vengeance to these hardened sinners, and they profited by it only to offend Heaven with renewed misdeeds.

De Bourbon advanced, as Attila had done before him, an instrument and messenger of the Divine wrath—without himself comprehending the purposes for which he was reserved—obeyed the unseen hand that hurried him onward in the path of carnage and destruction; and, during this fatal night, a heavy fog had settled over the eternal city, as if to hide from her eyes the sword that menaced her with ruin.

The camp of de Bourbon, motionless and silent, with its gray wings spread over the hill, resembled a vulture watching the prey it is about to devour. The Lutheran and Catholic soldiers, resting now indifferently under the same tents, forgot their past dissensions, and drank freely to the sacrilege by which they were so soon to enrich themselves. A spectator, seeing their looks, and listening to the indecency and ferocity of their songs and language, would have imagined that the demons from hell had donned their cuirasses and cassocks, to accomplish some perdition denounced from on high.

Three soldiers, seated on empty casks, were amusing themselves with scurvy jests, not far from the duke's tent, which was distinguished by the blazoned shield on its closed curtains.

"Lopez! Diego! comrades!" said one of them, stretching out his hand toward the horizon, "there comes the signal that our fatigues are soon to terminate."

"I would not take ten thousand ducats for my share of the spoils," said another.

"But after all," cried a third, "Bourbon treats us like spoiled children. Do you remember what he said to us a year ago, on his return from Madrid? 'I hope,' quoth he, 'speedily to make you all rich by the pillage of magnificent Rome.'"

"That's what I call talking, though!" said Heinrich, the first speaker; "what say you?"

"Why, I say," said the other, "that the Beggar has kept his word. Rome is before us; and, as soon as it is light, assault and pillage!"

"Yea," added Diego; "and even if we should encounter the plague, as we did at Milan, I should not the less avail myself of the privilege of war—*qui potest capere, capiat.*"

"As far as I am concerned," said Lopez, "I will give up to your tender mercies the princes of the church. I shall be satisfied with the convents."

"You are not difficult!" replied the Castilian soldier: "by the mass! I count upon both the one and the other."

"Softly, my masters!" interrupted the lasquenet Heinrich. "Do not forget that Fernando de Gonzagua, of the Italian light-horse, has reserved for himself the pillage of his uncle's, the cardinal's, mansion."

"And colonel Frundsberg," added Diego, "has reserved for himself the pope. You have seen that thick rope of gold, that he wears like a chain over his haubergeon. Well! that is to make a necklace for his holiness, with a running-knot, because, he says—to all lords, all honors."

"By the way, my brave Catholic comrades," said the lasquenet, "you are no longer afraid of ghosts, as you were in the chartreuse of Pavia."

"No more afraid than yourself, Heinrich," said Lopez. "We follow the general, were he to lead us to hell!"

"Otherwise, you would not be worthy to be one of us," said the lasquenet.

"One thing, however, sometimes makes me ill at ease," said Diego. "What will the emperor say to our enterprise?"

"For my part," said Heinrich, twisting his mustaches with his finger, "I recognise no sovereign but the duke; and, like a true lasquenet of the Rhine, as I am, I would serve under him—ay, against the emperor himself."

"Well spoken!" cried Lopez; "we must have a cup of Orvieto wine after that. But tell me, Heinrich, does it not seem, for some days, that the general is more gloomy and downcast than usual? Think you, his star is waning?"

"Pshaw!" answered the lasquenet contemptuously: "to make amends for disbelieving the pope, you put your faith in astrology. The beads of the Spanish Catholic will peep out of your brigand's cassock! Why, man! don't you see that it is the illness of Madam Saint Romain which afflicts the general?"

"I truly think," said Diego, "that the general has of late softened his manner toward that unhappy lady."

"Oh, as to that," returned Heinrich, "one can't help feeling kindly disposed toward those who are faithful in adversity. Ever since de Pomperant and his other

French friends returned to Paris to make setter-dogs of themselves by the side of king Long Nose, Madam de Saint Romain has staid by the duke, dressing his wounds, and encamping, like us, under the canopy of heaven. Such constancy deserves some thanks at the least."

"May God preserve her life, poor lady!" said Diego.

"Hush!" replied Heinrich: "Speak not so loud. We are near her tent also, and she may be disturbed. Let us move farther off."

The conversation was here interrupted by the voice of the Constable, who said:

"Ho! my squires! Bring me more lights."

Lights were brought accordingly, and the duke was discovered, entirely armed, leaning on a table, and examining certain charts that were unrolled upon it.

His face had lost none of its haughtiness, or of its severe and dignified repose, notwithstanding the trials and deprivations he had undergone: and he seemed now to contemplate with entire serenity, the goal which his desperation had aimed at, and his prowess had at last attained.

"A few hours more," he muttered, as he strode up and down his tent, "and I, the outlaw of Francis; the dupe of Charles; the penniless adventurer who drag forty thousand brigands in my train, shall behold at my feet the capital of the world! The papal tiara, perchance reeking with blood, shall crown my head. Bourbon will be emperor of Rome! What will the king of France, the eldest son of the church, say to that? What will the monarch of Catholic Europe say? Their united power cannot prevent my triumph, though soon I may cease to control this undisciplined host, that has whirled itself and me through Italy like a tempest of iron and fire—uprooting towns and provinces, laying low the loftiest heads, melting down churches into ingots of silver and gold, adding murder to sacrilege, and stamping my name on all these terrible mementos of vengeance!"

"What a life is mine!" he continued after a pause: "How dearly have I purchased the power I so earnestly desired! 'Tis indeed a sceptre I have gained—but it is a sceptre of heated iron, that scorches the hand which wields it. And then, perchance, this fearful battle may be my last! Perhaps Rome is the city, where, according to the prediction of a wise astrologer, who never yet deceived me, humiliation awaits my triumph. If it should be so—if the power that protects me, is coextensive with a woman's life—but she is in my camp, the only friend who has remained faithful to my fortunes, and that, despite my coldness and ingratitude to her."

The curtain of the tent was now raised, and a man armed cap-à-pie entered, saying:

"It is two o'clock, my lord, and I await your orders."

"De Frundsberg," said the Constable, "have any troops arrived to succor the besieged city?"

"None, my lord," replied de Frundsberg. "The Marquis of Saluces and the Duke of Urbino, are both on their march, but they will arrive only in time to witness our victory."

"It matters little," said the duke, throwing a cloak over his shoulders; "the fate of the city is sealed. I will visit the camp."

"Shall I accompany you, my lord?" asked de Frundsberg.

"No, await me here," said de Bourbon. "How is Madam de Saint Romain to-night?"

"She has asked to see you, sire," replied de Frundsberg.

"Is she worse, then?" said the duke, slowly. "Go, Frundsberg," he added, "say to her that I will soon obey her summons."

The duke disappeared among the long white lines of tents, and the noise of his footsteps grew fainter and fainter, like the sounds of a dying echo.

De Frundsberg shook his head sadly, as the duke retired.

"Alas!" said he, "we cannot long conceal the truth from him: her glass is nearly run!"

He proceeded at once to the tent of the unfortunate Susan, who was lying on her couch, pale and emaciated, with her mother, scarcely less pale, watching at her side.

"Will the priest come?" inquired Susan, the moment that de Frundsberg entered.

"I have done my utmost, madam," said de Frundsberg, "to obtain the assistance you need: but what priest would venture into this wild camp, and especially, under no better safeguard than my authority?"

"Mother," said Susan faintly, observing Cesara's almost frantic emotion at this answer, "forgive me for such a wish; but indeed, you know not how ill I am. De Frundsberg," she continued, "what of de Bourbon?"

"The duke, madam, has just now inquired after your health," said de Frundsberg.

"But you concealed from him that I am at the point to die?" said Susan, eagerly.

"I did not advertise him of that, madam," said de Frundsberg; "but he will soon wait upon you."

"How happy shall I be to see him once again before I die!" cried Susan, her eyes brightening with enthusiasm as she spoke.

"Say not so, my child! say not so!" cried Cesara: "speak not thus of death. You must live for me—for me, who have sacrificed the dearest passion of my soul, next to my love for you, to reconcile to you the object of your affections. To promote your honorable union with de Bourbon, I have waived the accumulated hate of years, and followed you through the devastations of my beloved Italy. Do not leave me now in a double despair!"

"We will speak of this hereafter, dearest mother," said Susan. "Help me now to sit higher in the bed. Alas! this cruel fever has exhausted my strength. Give me a mirror."

Cesara obeyed after a moment's hesitation, and Susan continued:

"How colorless are these cheeks!" said she. "Thus, a few days past, looked the corse of the girl at Arezzo, which they bore on an open bier to the tomb, its eyes closed and its hair dressed with flowers. When I am dead, mother, bury me after the custom of Italy: put in my hand a bouquet of the choicest flowers."

"Susan! Susan!" sobbed her mother, in an agony of grief, "you will drive me mad, if you talk thus!"

At this moment, the Constable approached the tent. He was followed by his principal officers, among whom was Philibert de Chalons, prince of Orange, an illustrious adventurer, and, like his leader, a fugitive from the French camp. This young man, who was a scion of the ancient house of Chalons-sur-Saone, had offered his services to Francis I., but subsequently took mortal offence at the treatment he received from his sovereign. He was the worthiest man, both in courage and talent, to succeed the duke in the command of the army. Louis de Gonzagua, leader of de Bourbon's German troops, was another brave man, whom the soldiers nicknamed *the bully*. He, with Ferdinand de Gonzagua, Sciarra Colonna, and other noted warriors, were now in de Bourbon's suite.

"I count on you to succeed me," said the Constable, laying his hand on Philibert's shoulder, "in case I fall during the assault. Whatever may chance, the city now is ours. At the dawn of day, a detachment will glide noiselessly along the quarter Saint Esprit, after leaping the low wall that adjoins the garden of the Cardinal Ezmellino. My scouts have discovered a breach there, closed up by wooden bars, but sufficiently large to admit the body of a man. A second detachment will attack at the rue Julienne, where the pope's Swiss guards are posted. Both assaults must prevail, and the main body of the army will have nothing to do but take possession of the town. We part now, gentlemen, for our final preparations. At the beating of the drums, we move on."

As the officers separated for their respective quarters, a soldier came to de Frundsberg to say that a monk had arrived in the camp, who desired to speak with him.

In the meantime, the Constable repaired to the tent where Susan and her mother were awaiting him.

"You are welcome, my lord," said Susan, collecting all her energies for an interview which she feared would be her last, but with a determination to conceal her situation from de Bourbon.

"My dear Susan," said he, kissing her hand, "I hardly expected to find you awake at this hour."

"And why not?" asked Susan. "You are yourself still encased in your armor."

Bourbon sighed as he answered, "It is long since I have enjoyed a peaceful sleep!"

"That, my lord, is because God, when he forms heroes, exempts them from the ordinary necessities of humanity," replied Susan.

"Alas!" cried the duke, "would that I had been born a poor gentleman, to live in obscurity on my own domains, free from the insults of Francis and the duplicity of Charles!"

"Is this," exclaimed Susan, "all the happiness that glory confers? Does the victor of Pavia and the conqueror of Italy, utter such words of despondency as these?"

"Susan," replied the Constable, in a subdued tone, "I would gladly exchange this empty glory, these fruitless conquests, this illustrious name written in human blood upon the monuments of Italy, for a nook of shade and repose in my beloved France!"

"My lord," inquired Susan, in astonishment, "what can you desire, that you do not possess?"

"Peace of mind! which I shall never enjoy again!" answered the Constable, gloomily.

"And I, too, have lost mine for ever!" responded Susan, in the same tone.

"Susan," said de Bourbon, "when God created you, he placed my happiness in

your charge, as in a precious coffer, that was to keep the treasure secure against all contingency. But alas! sweet sister of my earlier days, mystic personification of my conscience, yet helpless victim to my unrestrained ambition, peace departed from me the moment that I ceased to respect your innocence. Remorse now unites us both; a similar fatality crushes us both, and we must both expiate our errors. You, Susan, should repent: you may and you will. But for me," he continued, while a scornful smile curled his lips, "I desire no repentance. Let Heaven strike me, an it will! I have forgotten the words that prevail there: I know no longer how to pray!"

"Oh! say not so!" cried Susan, hiding her face in her hands: "there is yet time for repentance. How noble an act it would be, my lord," she added, after a moment's pause, "how worthy of your fame, to restore the crown which you will this day win, and with it surrender the sword that the emperor gave into your hand—that you may afterward say to the sovereign of half the world, I might have been your equal, but would not!"

"No!" replied the Constable, "my destiny urges me onward. I am but the slave of the army that calls me its master; and these bloodhounds from hell! will never rest until they are gorged with victory, wine, and slaughter. But the time wears away. Farewell, Susan, till the battle is won."

"God speed you, my lord, and let us yet trust in His mercy!" cried Susan, as he retired.

She threw herself back on her pillow, exhausted by the interview; and as soon as she was assured that the duke was beyond the reach of her voice, she yielded to the intensity of her disease, and groaned aloud with pain and terror.

"Oh! mother! mother!" she said, "I feel that I am dying!"

Cesara slowly passed her hand over her own feverish brow, as if to recall the thoughts that the last few minutes of excitement had dispelled, and it now appeared that even those minutes had sufficed to distract her mind, already overtasked by sorrow, with the frenzy of past days——

"That," said she, incoherently, "was my child's voice, calling from the tomb of the Chartreuse for vengeance!"

"Ha!" cried Susan, startled at the tone and words of her mother, "is it indeed so? Is the astrologer's prediction to be fulfilled? Yes! I feel, even now, the chill of death upon me! Take me, then, oh God! but spare de Bourbon!"

"Who pronounced the name of Italy's destroyer?" cried Cesara, wildly, and raising herself up to her full height. "Heaven itself calls to me for vengeance. I will find her out, and murder her in her sleep. Thus did the soldiers of her paramour murder my sleeping babes!"

And so saying, she seized the lamp that stood near, and shading its flickering flame with her hand, she approached stealthily toward Susan, peering into her face, but not recognizing her as her daughter.

"Mother! mother!" cried Susan, "do not look thus, nor suffer me thus to die!"

"Die!" said Cesara, "who talks of dying?——'Tis she!" she continued, muttering to herself. "I know her! Susan de Langenfeld, the captain's daughter. Yes! yes! you say true. You are to die!"

"Dear mother!" cried Susan again, her wonder and terror at this incomprehensible conduct combining with her malady to render her almost speechless, "are you dreaming? or what is it that distracts you?"

"Oh yes!" continued Cesara, more wildly than ever, "call your mother! call her loud! But I will show you no more mercy than they showed my poor babes. I tell you," she shouted, seizing Susan in her arms, "I tell you, you shall die!"

Susan could struggle but faintly, to escape this mortal embrace.

"Help! help!" she cried. "Alas! I have no voice to make myself heard! Mother! mother! why do you talk of killing me? Great God! she is mad! Help! help!"

But her struggles and her cries were alike unavailing. The wretched maniac pressed, shook and clung to her with the fury of a tigress; and long before help could arive, the mother had spread a sheet upon her daughter's lifeless corse, and sate down by the side of it, exulting, in her delirium, over her consummated vengeance!

After a time, de Frundsberg entered the tent, followed by a monk, who bore in his hand a crucifix, and whose face was concealed in the hood of his gown.

THE EXPIATION.....PART II.

The Constable de Bourbon had retired to his tent, and soon forgot his griefs and vexations in the one absorbing thought of his mind—the taking of Rome. The sack and pillage of the Holy City! This exploit was to be the crowning glory of his life!

With his hands pressed to his throbbing temples, and his elbows leaning on a chart of the city, his eyes measured the extent of its walls; the imperial streets where, with the rising sun, his standard would float; the ancient and sumptuous palaces, so soon to become the prey of his soldiers.

He thought of the Vatican, opening its gates to receive the new sovereign of the eternal city; the incense of the cathedrals smoking before him in golden censers, and the amazement of the world at the hardihood and success of his ambition.

While his mind was filled with these images, he fell into an uneasy slumber, and his heavy head sunk to the table on which he was leaning. But even in sleep, a mind so overburdened, seldom enjoys the repose that calms and soothes the troubles of humanity. To the emotions of real life, succeed the illusions of dreams—a second existence, that has its continuity and relative reality, in alternations from good to bad emotions, from pleasure to pain, from happiness to despair.

The Constable had hardly closed his eyes, when the remembrances of his past life, came up to mingle with current events—mysterious spectres evoked from their tomb by some hidden influences. He imagined himself to be stretched on a bier, covered with a black pall that was studded with tears of silver. Around him, were chanted prayers for the dead, in a strange measure; and as he listened, the priests parodied the holy words, and substituted the name of Satan for that of the Deity. He, with great pain and labor, removed the drapery of the funeral sheet, to examine the persons around him, and under their monks' hoods he recognized faces that he had formerly known. There were other heads, too, entirely denuded of flesh; and these he knew, by their names being inscribed on their hoods in letters of fire. Others were more recently deprived of life, for spots of blood and pieces of flesh were visible beneath their gowns; and others still were alive, and glowered on him with hatred and revenge. Among the fearful host, the Constable saw again his victims of Pavia—Bonnivet, de Chabannes, de Foix, de Genouillac and the Bastard of Savoy; his partisans and friends condemned and punished by the Parliament, after his departure from Moulins, were here too; and, foremost of their number, stood his unfortunate kinsman, Saint Vallier, still scarred by the chains of the Bastille.

The voices of all these, together with the joint curses of Francis and the Duchess d'Angoulême, devoted the memory of the outlaw to the execution of man and the wrath of Heaven. One voice, alone, arose above this chorus of maledictions, to implore for him the pardon of Heaven. As de Bourbon heard these tones, he seized the robes of the young man that uttered them, and strove to discover who he was; but as he did so, the whole pageant vanished, and the duke imagined himself on his war-horse, in the midst of a horrible melée, surrounded by dead bodies, falling palaces, and flames.

The duke sprang from his chair, and awoke from his dream as de Frundsberg entered his tent for orders.

"The day is breaking, my lord," said he.

"I am ready," said the duke, endeavoring to shake off the impression of the dream; "but has not something dreadful occurred? It seems to me that the air is on fire, and the earth trembles."

"'Tis the signal announcing that the attack has begun," replied de Frundsberg, as at this moment the beating of drums reached his ear.

De Bourbon stayed not for further parley, but placing his helmet on his head, said to de Frundsberg:

"Remember, that after my death, the Prince of Orange is to succeed me in the command of the army." Then raising his visor and hastening forth from his tent, he added: "'T is with an uncovered face that it becomes Bourbon to confront his foes!"

His soldiers received him with their customary song, of which Brantoure has given us the chorus:

> "Calla, calla, Julio Cesar, Hannibal y Scipion;
> Viva la fama de Bourbon!"

meaning, literally,

> 'Silence, Julius Cæsar, Hannibal and Scipio!
> Long live the fame of de Bourbon!"

The first rays of the morning sun had begun to dispel the mist, which, during the night, lay like a winding-sheet over the capital of the Christian world. At the sight of those beautiful churches, with glittering domes and marble colonnades; of the magnificent palaces, overflowing with the treasures of past ages; a lengthened shout of enthusiasm burst forth from all the ranks.

The duke responded to their shout, and rushed on to the assault. He seized, with his own hand, a scaling-ladder from one of his men, planted himself at the foot of the rampart, mounted, and in the twinkling of an eye, was followed by his host.

At this moment, a shot from an arquebus struck him in the side, and he fell. De Frundsberg hastened to his assistance.

"Hide my death from the foe," cried the dying hero. "Press on: the victory must be ours!"

A cloak was thrown over him. He was left in charge of some of his followers, and the sack of Rome commenced.

But Renzo da Céri had not waited until now to beat a retreat. This leader, as cowardly with the foe as overbearing to his own slaves, was the first to fly, crying, "The enemy is upon us: save yourselves!" and, escaping by the Sistine bridge, he took refuge in the castle of Saint Angelo. Thither, too, Pope Clement was soon after transported by means of a secret communication, leading through the thick walls of the Vatican.

Meantime, the Roman ladies, the prelates, the merchants, bearing in their arms their most precious treasures, rushed through the streets to seek safety in the ancient mausoleum of Adrian. Already were three thousand fugitives assembled there, when the soldiers of de Bourbon approached.

The portcullis was instantly lowered, though the act excluded hundreds who were flying thither for succor, and had arrived a moment too late. These were remorselessly massacred, and despoiled, before the eyes of their fellow-citizens.

The assailants, unable to carry the castle by storm, posted guards along the Tiber to hold the pope in check, and threw themselves tumultuously into the city to slay and plunder.

This capital of the Christian world now presented the appearance of an immense saturnalia, where forty thousand brigands enacted more crimes than all Italy had beheld for a century. Each house became the scene of a frightful drama; high-born dames and maidens endured the most brutal outrages; and fathers were seen to poniard their daughters, to preserve them from sufferings worse than death. Churches, where the women sought refuge, were transformed into places of debauch, and the Catholic and Lutheran soldiers fought there for the possession of the consecrated vessels. Nay, the latter-named ruffians, to deride the faith of their companions, muffled themselves in the priests' stoles and capes, and paraded the streets, singing obscene songs, and chasing before them the priests themselves, whom they first dressed up in the garments of lacqueys.

In following out the plan of rapine and destruction, the palaces of the cardinals and the most magnificent cathedrals were metamorphosed into stables; the frescoes of the ancient masters were spattered with mud; and the medals of the Roman emperors, with the richest ornaments of the altars, were melted into ingots. There was not a soldier in the army who did not array himself in a noble's pourpoint and decorate his breast with chains of gold.

This profanation of the Holy City lasted for two entire months, and ended with famine and pestilence.

As if Heaven reserved the author of these calamities only for the consummation of its wrath, de Bourbon did not survive the taking of Rome.

After bequeathing to history one of its most notable names, and while he was yielding up a life that is still an object of execration to every good Catholic, a young, unknown monk knelt at his side and prayed for his soul to the last. The same monk had that morning closed the eyes of the unhappy daughter of Cesara Visconti. He belonged to the venerable brotherhood of Saint Benedict, and was called, previously to his taking holy orders, the Sieur Ponthus de Saint Romain.

THE END.